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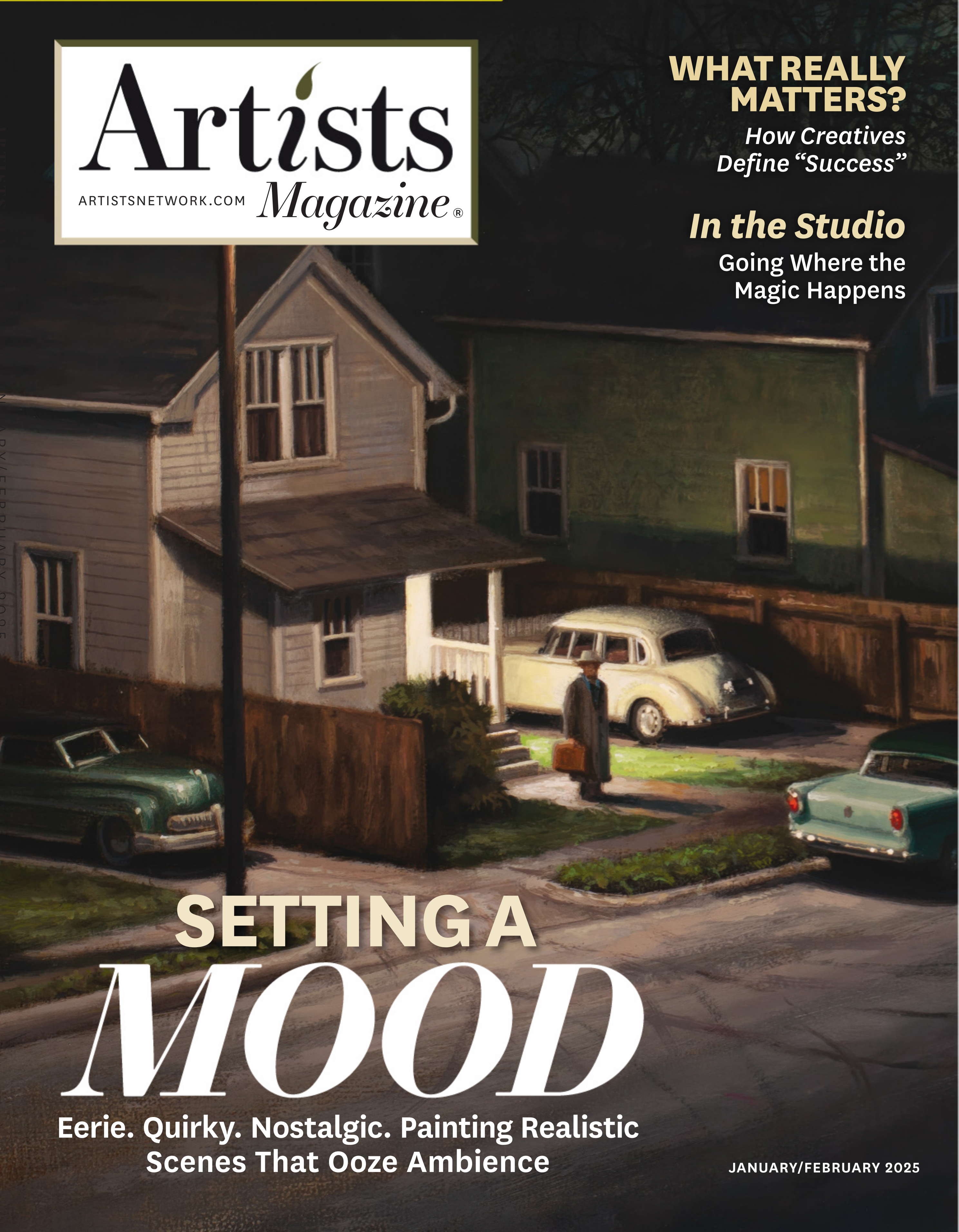

WHAT REALLY MATTERS?

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In the Studio

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SETTING A *MOOD*

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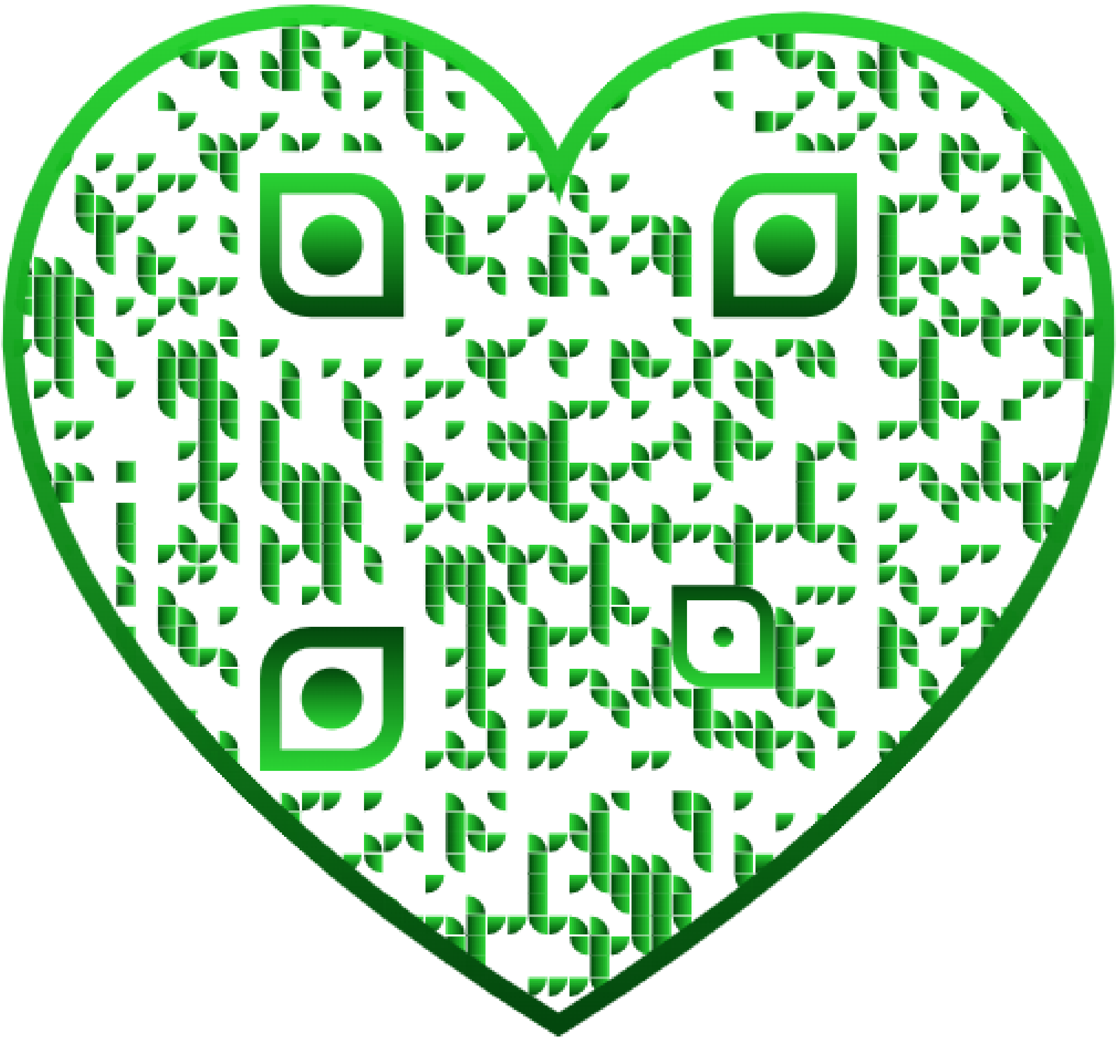

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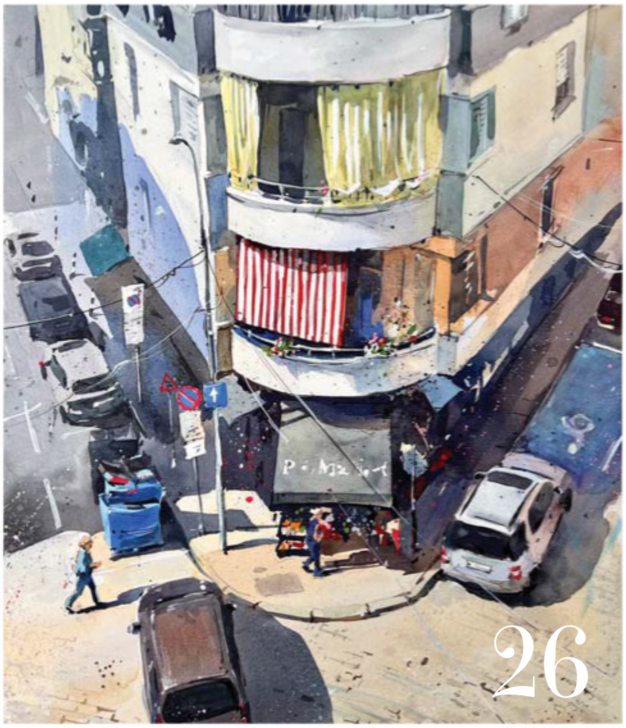

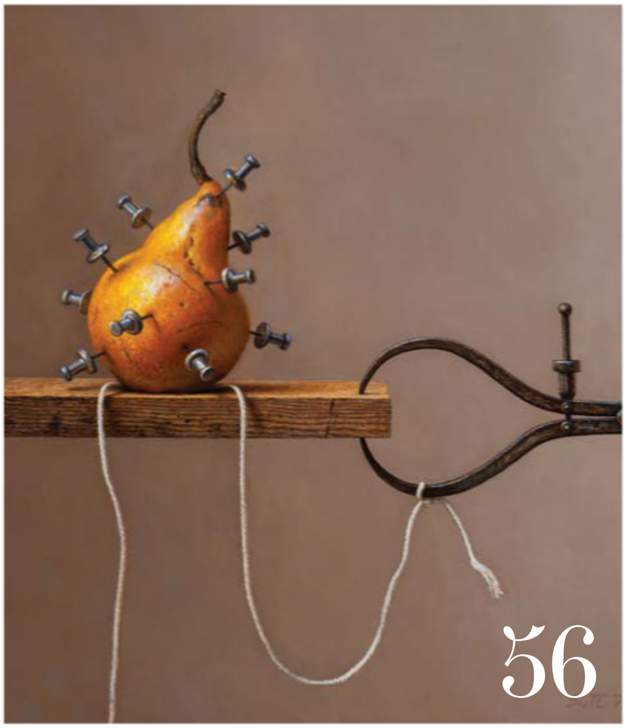

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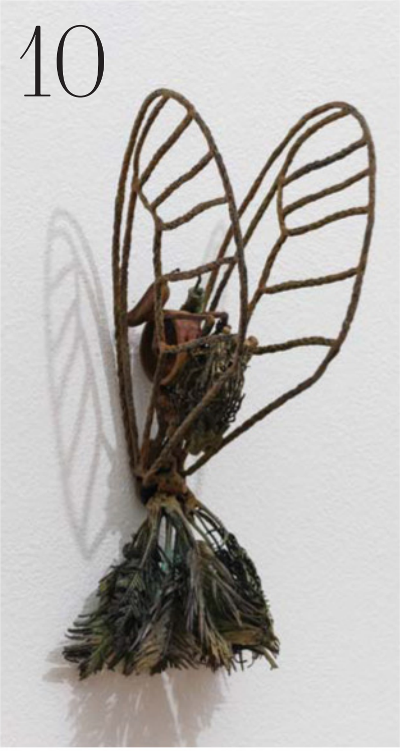

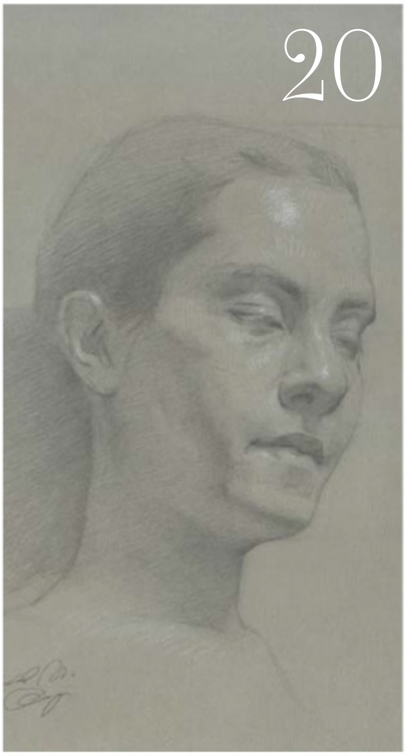

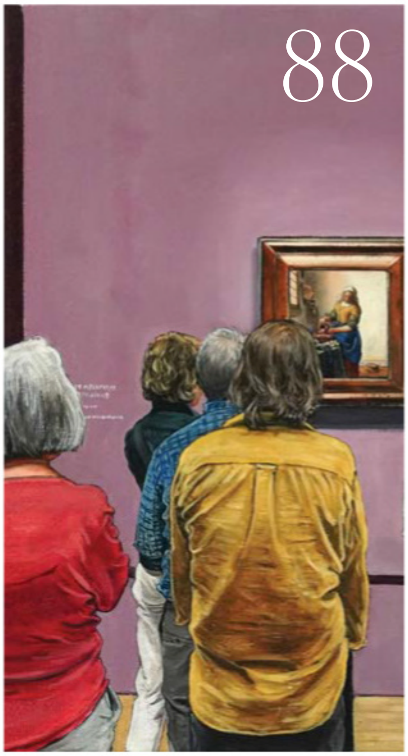

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Infinite Variety

For EMILY NEWMAN, making art is about exploration, play and trying new things. BLICK's custom canvas builder allows her to introduce surface variety into her creative practice.

GIVEN THE ABSTRACT NATURE OF EMILY NEWMAN'S FLORAL-INSPIRED paintings, it might be surprising to learn that the artist describes her personality as a bit Type A with a tendency toward perfectionism. "When I used to paint and illustrate with more realism, I was never happy," she says. She recalls leaving the studio feeling unhappy and stressed, but she finds the intuitive process of her abstract approach liberating. "When I'm painting abstracts, I'm able to separate myself from expectations of a specific end result and allow myself to find freedom in the actual process of painting," she explains. "It's incredibly therapeutic and healing."

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Emily works primarily in acrylic and mixed media. "The durability and the 'quickness' of acrylic works very well for my lifestyle as a full-time mom," she says. "I don't have to worry about protecting my acrylics in the same way as many other media. I know that paint layers will dry quickly, so even if I only have a few minutes to hide away in my studio, I can make progress and feel like I've accomplished something."

Her go-to paints are BLICK Artists' Acrylics. "I've tried many different brands but the consistency of BLICK Acrylics is something I always come back to," she says. "I appreciate being able to get high-quality pigments, on a budget, with the right workability for my process."

In terms of color, Emily doesn't have a fixed palette. "My palette is always inspired by where my heart is," she says, "but I find I'm primarily drawn to earthy colors and muted, neutral blues and greens."

Also essential to Emily's toolkit is a good dagger brush. "I've found a way to create really organic lines with them," she says. She also works with Winsor & Newton watercolors, Rembrandt soft pastels, palette knives and fine-line pens—all available from BLICK Art Materials.

JUST CREATE

If you want to know how to find more joy in your creative work and move your art forward, Emily recommends artists just create—more and more. "And don't let yourself get stuck doing one thing in an attempt to have a recognizable style," she adds. "Your style comes about naturally the more you create. Eventually, you'll look back and see that everything you've ever created was your style, because it came from your hand."

Emily Newman, of Emily Anne Art Studio, is a self-taught artist who paints mixed-media abstracts and abstract florals on both paper and canvas, primarily using acrylic paints and soft pastels. She lives in Atlanta, within a 10-minute drive from a BLICK Art Materials store. "That's where you'll find me every couple of weeks," she says, "with a new haul of goodies."

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MADE TO ORDER

A guiding principle for Emily's art practice is to make room for play and exploration. One of the ways she challenges herself to try new things is to vary the size and shape of the canvas on which she works, so she loves using BLICK's custom-stretched canvas builder. This made-to-order service allows artists to acquire a stretched canvas surface that's built to their own specifications. "This service allows me to acquire specific sizes for various projects and commissions," she says, "and offers the opportunity to try new styles and colors that keep me excited."

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From The Editor

At Fabriano in Watercolor, last fall, artists from all over the world—the U.S., Canada, Italy, Belarus, Bulgaria, Mexico, New Zealand and dozens of other countries—shared their best efforts in watermedia.

THE ART OF SHARING

In October, I visited Fort Worth, Texas, to attend the U.S. debut of Fabriano in Watercolor (Fabriano InAcquarello), an event that was born 15 years ago in the historic town of Fabriano, Italy, a site known for its revolutionary contribution to the manufacturing of paper back in 1264. The event's mission—the promotion of watermedia artists and of painting techniques on paper—has always featured an international focus, continually building up participation to include artists from more than 80 different countries. A massive exhibition of paintings along with demonstrations by many of the world's foremost watermedia artists are central to the experience, but a highlight of any gathering of this kind rests simply in the opportunity to meet other people who have the same passion for art.

> "Art is too important not to share."
> – Romero Britto

For my part, I met painters who had traveled from Mississippi, North Carolina and other parts of Texas, as well as painters whose journeys began in Italy, Belgium and the United Arab Emirates. One of the American artists I met was Lisa Arnold Franklin, of Florida, winner of the First Place Award in the Abstract/Experimental category (page 44) of the *Artists Magazine*'s 41st Annual Art Competition, which we celebrate in this issue. Seeing how pleased Franklin was to have received the recognition, I asked her to describe what it means to earn an award of this kind. "Being recognized by esteemed judges is excellent and lets me know I'm on the right journey," she told me. "Participating in shows always makes me work harder ... It challenges me as an artist—to learn, to grow, and to try new ideas and designs. It's always fascinating to view what my fellow artists are creating, too!"

Her comments offer an important reminder. *Looking* at art—whether it be 1,000 paintings in a multi-room, international exhibition or 40 works of art in a celebratory showcase of competition winners—can be inspiring and revelatory. But, *sharing* our art is also important, as it encourages us to take up new goals and stretch ourselves so that we can continue to create our very best.

Anne Hevener

ANNE HEVENER
Editor-in-Chief

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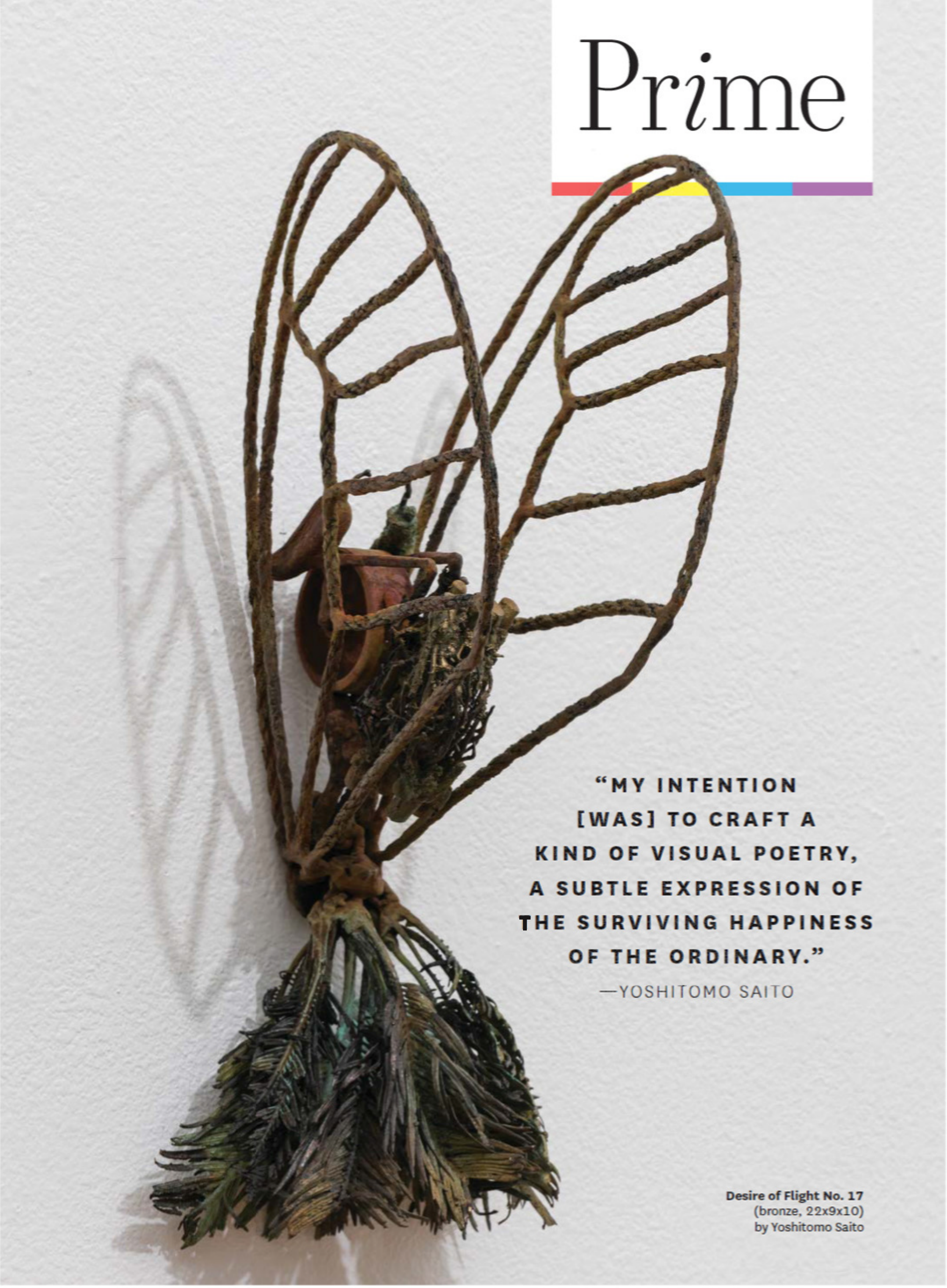


"MY INTENTION [WAS] TO CRAFT A KIND OF VISUAL POETRY, A SUBTLE EXPRESSION OF THE SURVIVING HAPPINESS OF THE ORDINARY."

—YOSHITOMO SAITO

Desire of Flight No. 17
(bronze, 22x9x10)
by Yoshitomo Saito

An Independent Personality

Degas' *Girl in Red* is an unsentimental portrait of a self-possessed teenager.

BY Jerry N. Weiss

Hilaire-Germain-Edgar De Gas (1834–1917), known to us as Edgar Degas, was born into a well-to-do family in Paris. Upon graduation from a *lycée*, or secondary school, Degas enrolled in law school at the University of Paris at the behest of his father. Given the younger Degas' dedication to drawing, it proved a short-lived career choice.

He redirected his efforts, taking classes at the École des Beaux-Arts and copying works at the Louvre. There followed a three-year stay in Italy, which allowed for further study of the masters and yielded the sketches that would result in a group portrait of his Neapolitan relatives, *The Bellelli Family*.

Degas returned to France in 1859, where he embarked on a series of historical narrative paintings. In the early 1860s, a consequential friendship with French painter Édouard Manet (1832–83) accelerated his interest in painting modern life. Thereafter, Degas' subjects included the ballet, brothels, racetracks, milliners and laundresses—in short, contemporary Parisian life.

By the mid-1860s, portraits of fellow artists, writers and family members were central to his output. His biographer Jean Sutherland Boggs noted, "More than one-fifth of Degas' work could not be described other than as portraiture, and it [is] more subtle and varied than any other painter's in France in the second half of the 19th century."

Degas didn't accept commissioned work; his subjects were strictly of his own choosing. Emma Dobigny, the young woman thought to be *Girl in Red*, was a professional model. Born Marie Emma Thuilleux, she posed for several prominent artists between 1865 and 1874. She modeled as both a woman of the middle class and as a laundress for Degas. In *Girl in Red*, she is herself—a self-assured teen directly confronting the renowned artist.

Degas' fondness for Dobigny can be discerned in a letter he wrote to her: "You have stopped coming to see me, my little Dobigny. Yet I haven't buried my street sign; the notice on the door still says Bubble Factory, and I am not going out of business. This evening I'll keep the shop open until six-thirty. Try to give me a posing session or two."

Jerry N. Weiss is a contributing writer to art magazines and teaches at the Art Students League of New York.

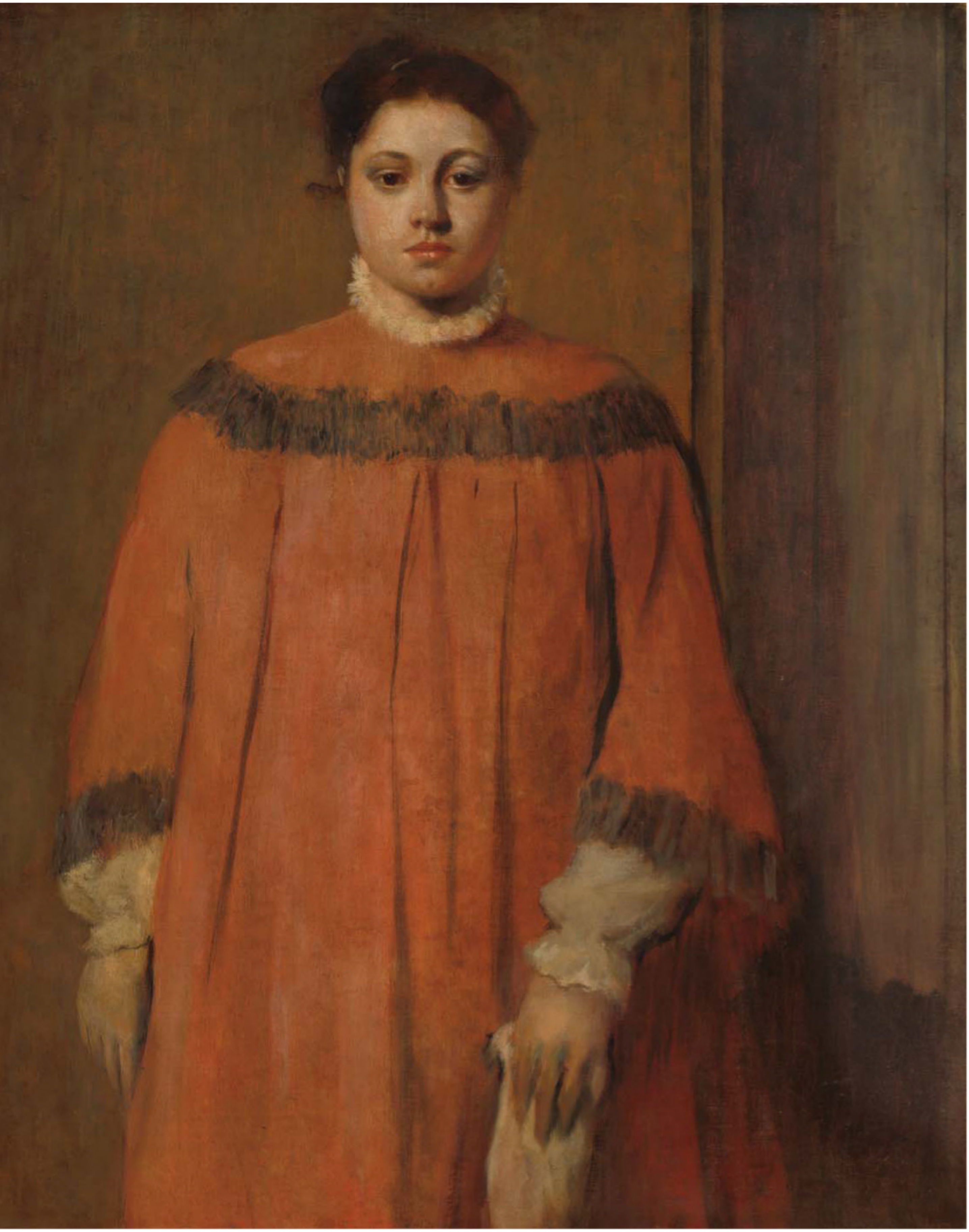
Girl in Red
(ca 1866; oil on canvas, $38\frac{15}{16}$x$31\frac{13}{16}$) by Edgar Degas
NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, CHESTER DALE COLLECTION, 1963.10.17

Little is known of Emma Dobigny's life. She lived in Montmartre, Paris, and worked as a model for Degas, Pierre Puvis de Chavannes and Camille Corot. A visitor to Corot observed that she "prattled, sang, laughed, didn't stay put," a liveliness that the artist found endearing.

Girl in Red is suffused with an engagingly warm palette. The orange-red of the dress runs through the space behind the model, where it vibrates against a complementary earth green. Red notes are present in Dobigny's lips and the corners of her eyes, and in the reflected lights that glow within the shadows.

The figure is less resolved than the head. Folds in the dress are indicated by dark accents applied with single brushstrokes. The characterization is consistent with Degas' portraits of other girls depicted unsentimentally—independent personalities every bit as interesting as adults.

Dobigny's round face is strongly modeled by a light coming from our upper left and is framed by a lacy white collar and auburn hair tied in a topknot. Viewed straight on, her facial features appear slightly asymmetrical. Pentimenti reveal that Degas lowered the lid over one eye. A related red chalk drawing, now in a private collection, raises the possibility that the painting was finished using preparatory drawings for reference.



Yoshitomo Saito takes a playful bow in front of **millonyearseeds** (bronze, dimensions vary depending on installation) at his "Of Sky and Ground" solo exhibition at the Denver Botanic Gardens, in 2021.

MILLER PHOTOGRAPHY

Reflections on a Solid Career

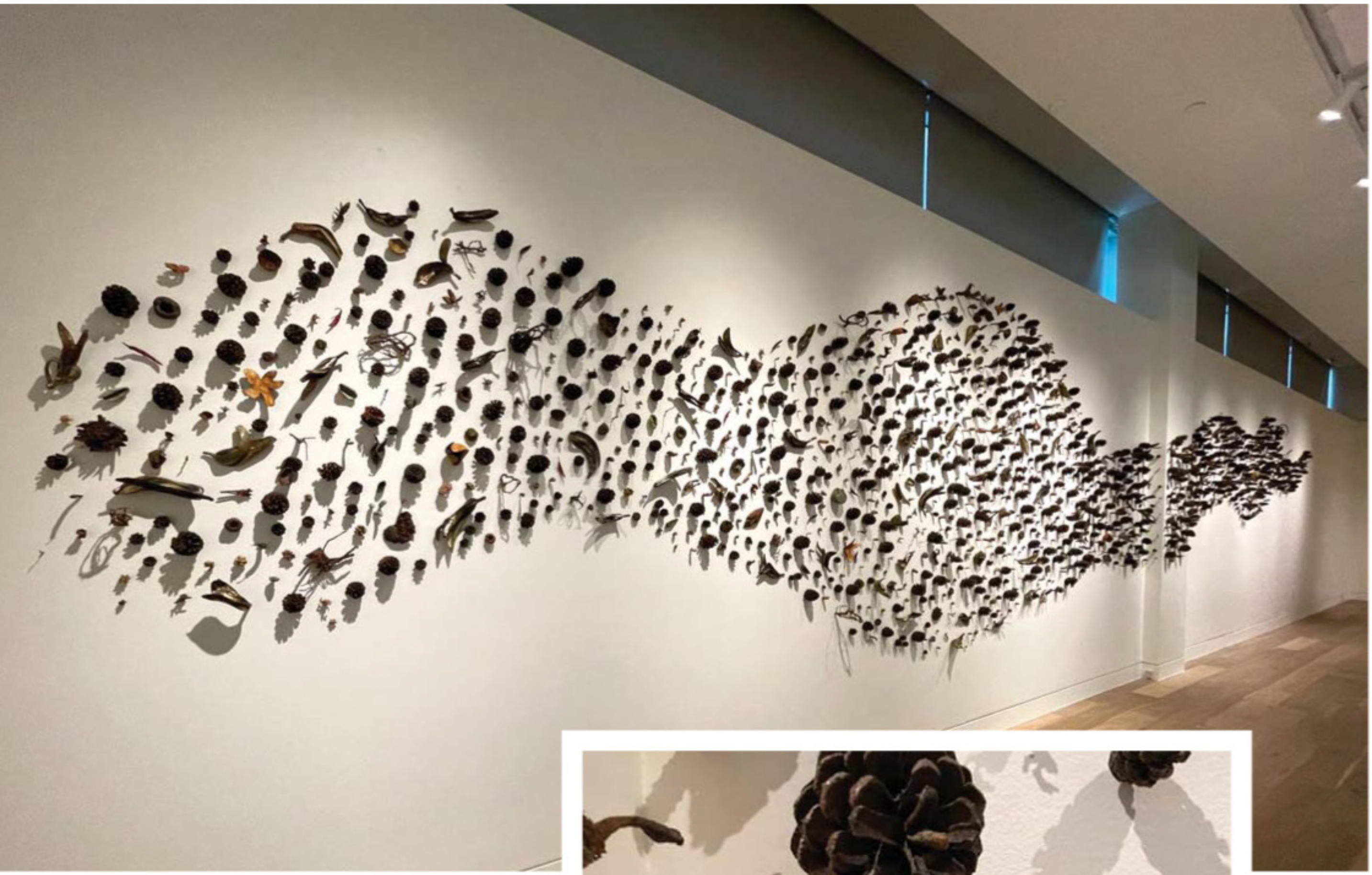
Sculptor **Yoshitomo Saito** casts a look back at his own bronze age.

By Colleen Smith

It is no small irony that the life-altering accident that ended the bronze-sculpting career of Yoshitomo Saito involved a tree. Saito has enjoyed 40 years as a celebrated sculptor casting lifelike works—many inspired by trees, twigs and branches.

On the afternoon of New Year's Eve, in 2021, however, the artist scaled a tree in his backyard in Lakewood, Colo., a Denver suburb. He was trimming branches when he fell to the icy ground, suffering injuries that left him with long-term disabilities. And while Saito managed a remarkable recovery, he found he was unable to continue his career in bronze sculpting—a medium that involves physical demands, as well as treacherous elements of fire and molten metals. "It pains me to admit that due to a spinal injury, I must bid farewell to the process of bronze casting, a tricky dance in a studio I've engaged in for four decades," says Saito.

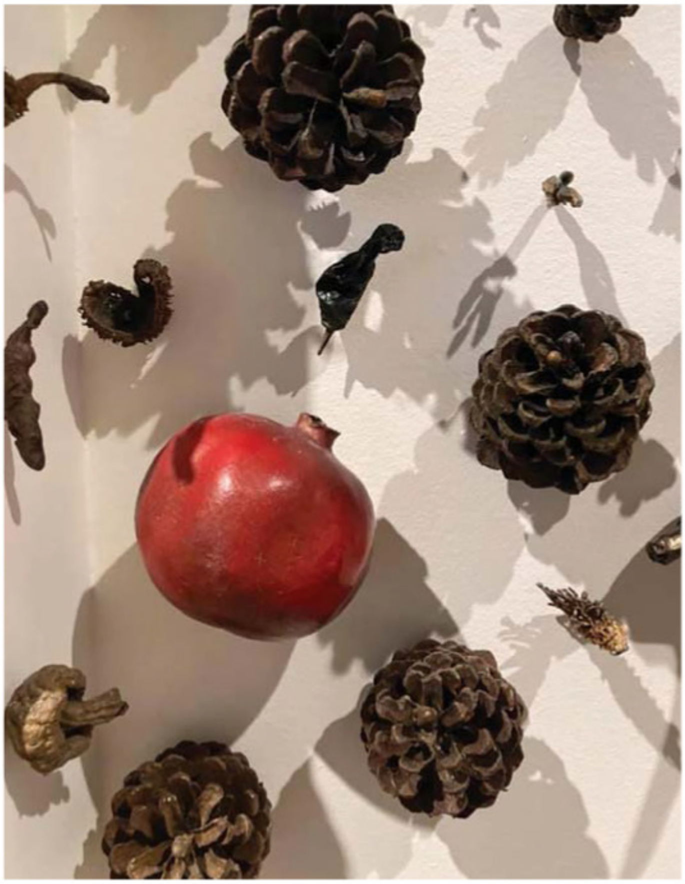
"To melt alloys of copper and tin in the furnace requires a high temperature—2,000 degrees Fahrenheit—to be precise," he continues. "Obviously, it's very dangerous if it's spilled over the crucible, so you have to know what to do with it and how to handle it in the studio. Melting metal also creates terribly unhealthy fumes, so you need to protect your lungs from life-threatening internal injuries."



TESTING HIS "METAL"

The sculptor, a native of Tokyo, first took up his art form in the mid-1980s. "During my time as a graduate student at California College of Arts and Crafts, in Oakland, I began experimenting with bronze," Saito says. "At first, I wasn't entirely certain. Perhaps I was searching for a medium that would allow me to delve deeper into my artistic self; however, almost immediately, colleagues began to suggest that I reconsider. They pointed out that in the discourse of contemporary art, using bronze might be seen as regressive."

Saito says he understood his colleagues' concerns and was aware of traditional bronze works in art history. Still, he was eager to test his mettle with bronze. The more he pondered their advice, the more he found himself drawn to the medium. "There was something dignified about it, something substantial," he says. "This alloy, after all, had been part of human history for 5,000 years, and at the time of



From smaller seed pods to the arch of a branch, Saito's reinterpretations of organic forms in cast bronze encourage contemplation in **millonyearseeds** (top). The detail (above) features a closer look at some of the elements.

SCOTT DRESSEL-MARTIN; DETAIL: COLLEEN SMITH

discovery, it was the highest technological invention of the world."

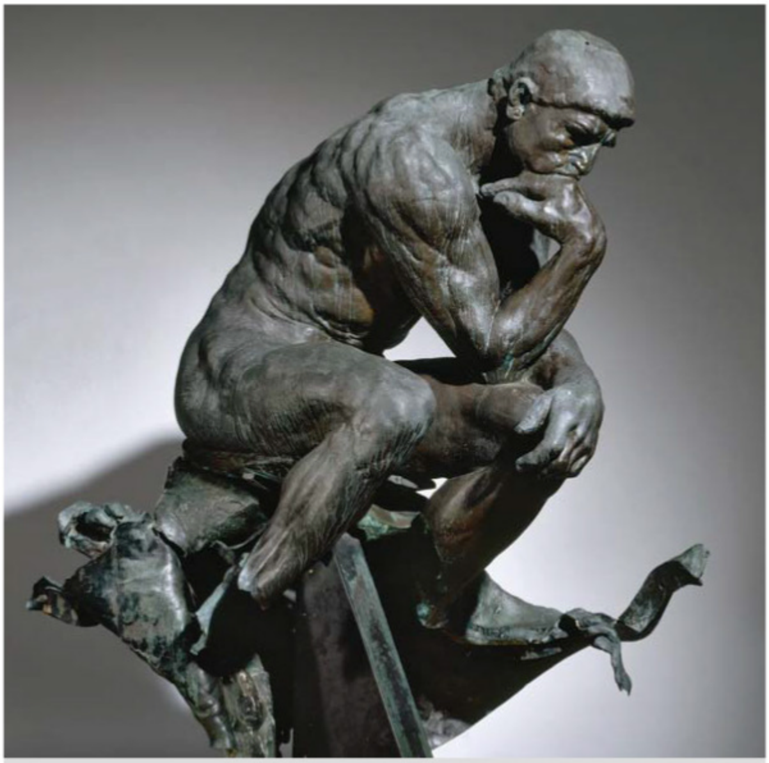
Saito recalls the influence of the Bay Area's era of invention in the 1980s. "Silicon Valley was blossoming into a hub of technological innovation," he notes. "While no one yet had mobile phones or personal computers at home, there was an unmistakable sense that the world was on the cusp of something transformative." As a young artist attuned to the pulse of change, Saito couldn't help but notice the tension between these advanced technologies and the weighty, labor-intensive tradition of metal casting.

Saito rejected the lightweight plastics of the digital age and turned his attention to the weighty bronzes of antiquity. "In the end, I chose bronze as my medium," he says. "It was a decision born of both resistance and conviction." For Saito, his process formed and shaped him even as he formed and shaped his bronzes. "Bronze casting has shaped my values, my artistic sensibilities and even the way I approach the world," he says.

BREAKING THE MOLD

Saito's personal approach to his art broke the mold for traditional bronzes. He shared an excerpt from a review by Alison Bing for *Sculpture Magazine*. "There's something anarchic and subversive in the way Saito works with bronze. Traditionally, bronze belongs to the realm of 'high' art, akin to marble or oil paint, and it is certainly not inexpensive. But by making bronze imitate the disposable, the commonplace, Saito invites us to rethink what this material has historically represented. While his work appears playful, it carries beneath the surface more profound explorations of transformation and identity."

The sculptor notes that his tendency was to reverse the tradition of immortalizing war heroes or political figureheads in bronze sculptures. "In my work, I often gravitated toward the ordinary such as natural debris from my backyard, fragments of nature from the local parks or the wilderness," says Saito. He's especially known for his realistic pine cones and seed pods. "My intention wasn't to glorify these simple images, but rather to craft a kind of visual poetry, a subtle expression of the surviving happiness of the ordinary," he continues. "Yes, bronze



A QUIET UNVEILING OF THE TRUTH

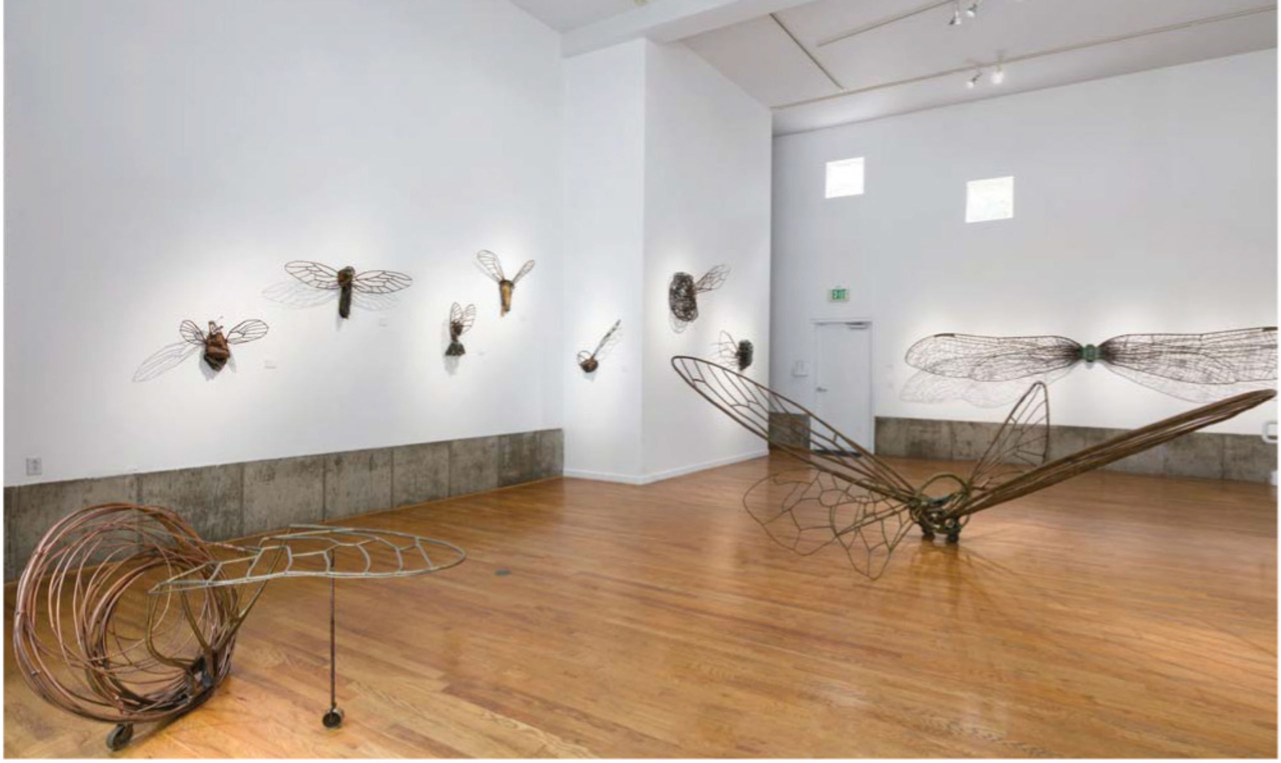
As Yoshitomo Saito steps away from the artistic process he had perfected over much of his lifetime toward a new path, the sculptor has taken many strolls down the memory lane of his artistry. Saito shares one such memory here:

"In the summer of 1983, I had the opportunity to visit some friends in Cleveland, Ohio. One afternoon, they took me to the Cleveland Museum of Art. As we wandered through the museum, I came upon *The Thinker* by Auguste Rodin [French, 1840–1917]. I was familiar with the piece, so the sculpture itself wasn't new to me, but this particular version was different. It had been half-destroyed by a homemade bomb in the late 1960s, but was still displayed at the museum. What struck me most was how this act of destruction had exposed the inside of the statue. Peering through the broken bottom, I could see the hollow interior. I remember feeling a strange sort of disillusionment. I had always assumed that bronze statues were solid, like marble or wood, but this one revealed a different reality.

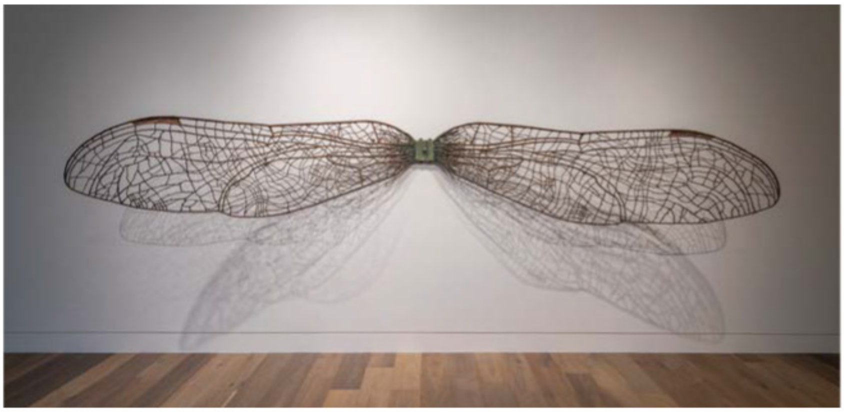
"Later, when I began learning bronze casting at California College of Arts and Crafts, it all became clear that you have to make large bronze objects hollow with even thickness all around, because, unlike iron, bronze shrinks considerably as it cools immediately after casting. If you tried to make a solid bronze sculpture of any significant size, you would lose the detail. The surface texture would distort, and the section in between thick and thin would likely crack. The hollow quality was a practical necessity, but also a revelation—a quiet unveiling of the truth behind the art."

The Thinker (ca 1880–81; bronze, 72x38¾x56) by Auguste Rodin

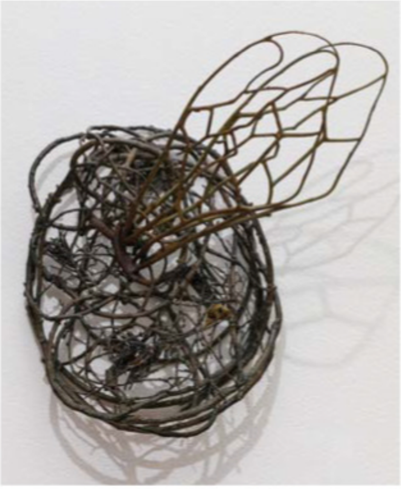
THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART; GIFT OF RALPH KING, 1917.42



A collection of Saito's winged sculptures appear ready to take flight at his solo exhibition at the William Havu Gallery, in Denver.



Wings of a Fairy (bronze, 28x187x19) spans the horizon line with elegantly delicate lines.



Saito infuses his interpretation of a common insect with visual poetry in **Desire of Flight No. 1** (bronze, 25x30X20).

has been used to immortalize the great and the powerful, to commemorate significant historical moments. That's the tradition. Yet, I deliberately moved in another direction, choosing to celebrate the mundane, the everyday, the things most would overlook. It's been my central conceptual approach throughout my career."

FORGING A NEW PATH

Post-accident, Saito has kept busy with the practical matters of closing his studio and rehoming his materials and tools. He has donated his equipment and tools to the Evergreen Center for the Arts, in Evergreen, Colo., and the center plans to offer bronze or aluminum casting classes. "The decision to part with my cherished foundry equipment and tools was not one made lightly," Saito says. "These tools have been faithful companions through the seasons of my artistic journey."

While Saito considers options for his post-bronze age, he reflects on his career in the medium. "This hiatus from producing art has turned into an unexpected period of introspection," he says. "I'm finding that the pause is providing a unique space to reflect on my past creations. As I stand 40 years later at the close of this chapter, I feel a strange mixture of nostalgia and fulfillment," Saito notes. "Looking back, I realize that in dedicating myself to this analog art, I was, in some ways, embracing something enduring, even in a world bent on change."

Colleen Smith is a Denver-based author, journalist, multimedia creative director and screenwriter.

LEARN MORE ABOUT SAITO AT YOSHITOMOSAITO.COM.

WES MAGYAR; COURTESY WILLIAM HAVU GALLERY

WE ASKED...

How do you define success as an artist?

WE ASKED...

YOU ANSWERED

"I succeed when I work every day, with purpose, and don't concern myself with what others may say or think about what I'm making. That is the business of art. Everything that comes after that is the art of business."

W. TRUMAN HOSNER
ARTIST

"Sales, shows or awards are obvious successes, but in order to create a sustainable art practice, we need to find joy and success in our day-to-day achievements. Sometimes, success just means putting paint on a canvas that day."

JULIE BECK
ARTIST

"Success for me is being able to connect with others through my work in a unique way. I feel like God gave me this odd talent with a paintbrush, and being able to share my view of the world with others has brought me a tremendous amount of joy and satisfaction. When I see my work click with someone else, there's nothing like it!"

MATTHEW BIRD
ARTIST

"Success as an artist is a mindset, not something quantifiable. To me, it means pursuing and achieving my artistic goals, learning and growing from the failures that are inevitably part of the journey, and being authentic to myself in the process."

ANNA ROSE BAIN
ARTIST

"Getting someone to see something in a new way. When a viewer indicates they've connected with what I tried to achieve. The real sweet spot is getting an informed compliment from another artist. "

—LORI RIDGEWAY

"When I make progress with my work, no matter how small, I consider it a great personal success."

—KINGA DE JONGH

"Think about how many great art students quit making art after high school or college, or after their first job or first child. One succeeds simply by continuing to create for the duration of one's life."

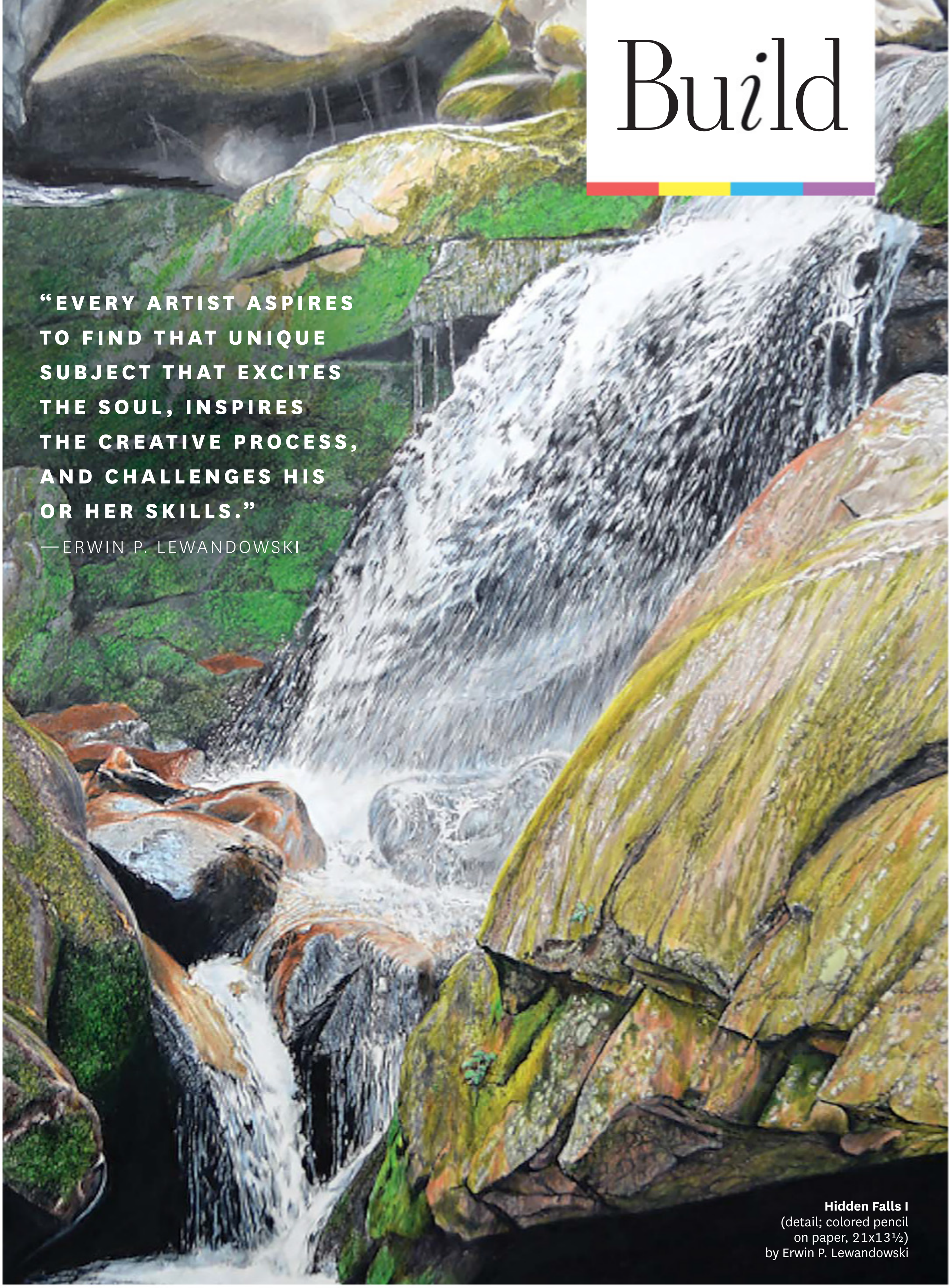
—DAVID MAXWELL

"When you look at a work and decide you can redo it better and maybe again."

—STEVE JENKINS

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM TO ANSWER QUESTIONS FOR "THE ASK." RESPONSES MAY BE EDITED FOR LENGTH AND CLARITY.

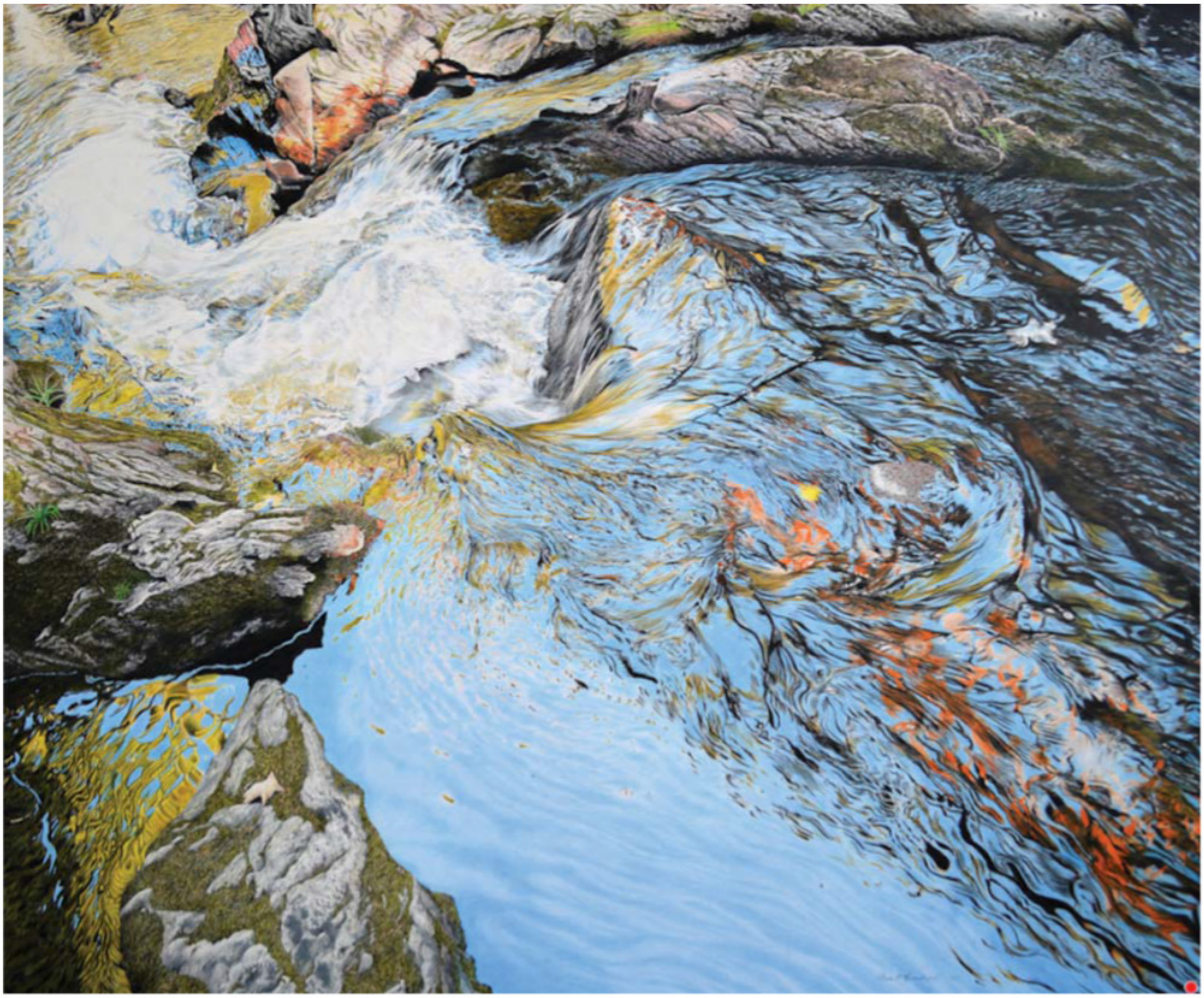
Build



> "EVERY ARTIST ASPIRES TO FIND THAT UNIQUE SUBJECT THAT EXCITES THE SOUL, INSPIRES THE CREATIVE PROCESS, AND CHALLENGES HIS OR HER SKILLS."
>
> —ERWIN P. LEWANDOWSKI

Hidden Falls I
(detail; colored pencil
on paper, 21x13½)
by Erwin P. Lewandowski

WORKING LARGE



Sizing Up the Composition

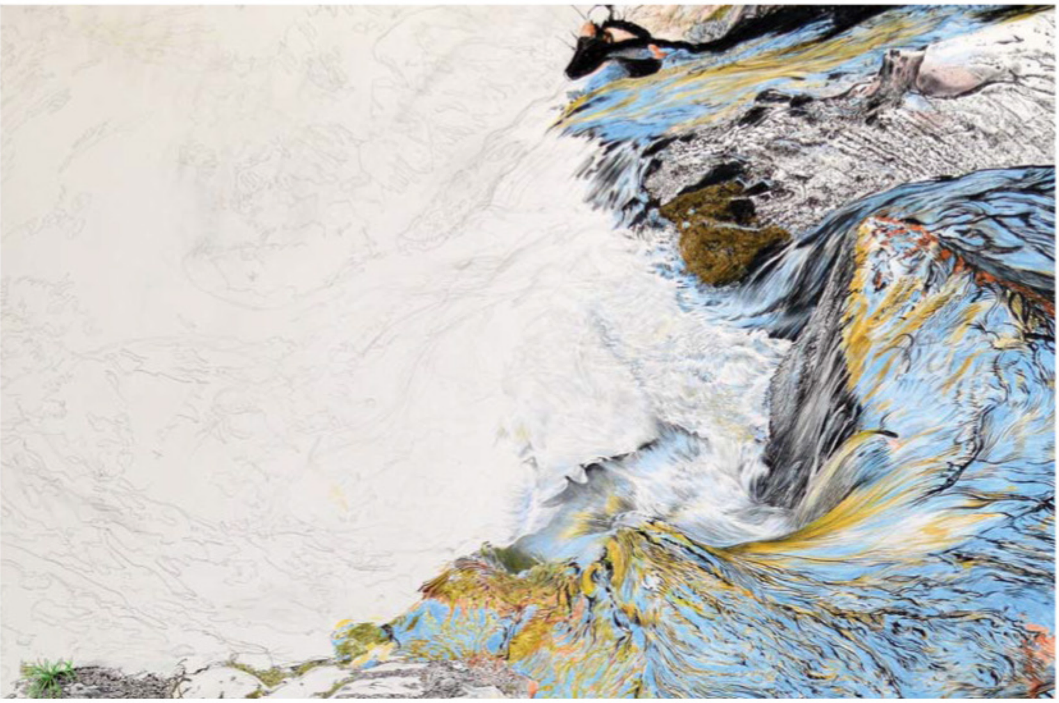
Early planning and a segmented approach can alleviate the challenges of creating a large-scale artwork and ensure a more pleasant working process.

BY Erwin P. Lewandowski

Every so often, a significant career opportunity presents itself to an artist. In my case, I received an invitation from an art source agency in Virginia asking if I'd consider creating an original large-format colored pencil drawing. The scene of interest was part of my portfolio and the source for the artwork. McLaren Northern Michigan Hospital Foundation wanted to have a similar piece created for the lobby of its new hospital addition.

I must admit to having second thoughts initially about working on *Falling Water XX* (above), which—at 42x40 inches—would be more than three times larger than anything I had drawn in my career. I decided to accept the commission with the understanding that there would be days of uncertainty and many challenges ahead.

OPPOSITE
Falling Water XX
(colored pencil on paper, 42x40)



LEFT
Part 1: The Waterfalls
After shaping the waterfalls (detail) with graphite pencil, I applied various hues of cool gray to add dimension and depth to the scene. Then I added yellow-orange highlights across the upper ridge of the falls and blended touches of blue into the cascading water.

GETTING STARTED

My first order of business was placing an order for a roll of Strathmore 300 Series Bristol paper. Getting the paper ready involved cutting it to size, laying it out on two large tables beneath heavy books and then waiting for the paper to flatten out. Six days later, the paper was finally ready; however, I still had to figure out a way to sketch the enormous scene. The solution I came up with was to tape the paper onto a wall. Little did I realize how difficult it would be to sketch that large in a standing position, so I limited my drawing sessions to 15 minutes in order to give my arm time to recover from the vertical workout. After three long days, the preliminary sketch was finished and ready for the next stage.

My attempts to apply color while the paper was on the wall failed miserably, and I soon found myself back at square one. Then it occurred to me that if I took some time to rearrange my equipment, there might be a way to position the oversized paper across two of my drafting tables. I was determined to work through the remaining stages while sitting in a chair, so I shifted the paper as I worked, rotating it from side to side as I applied color and drew all the elements.

At this point I realized that more time was needed for interpretive planning because the original reference scene lacked certain details and resolution. I also knew that in order to achieve success with the assignment, a change of mindset was necessary.

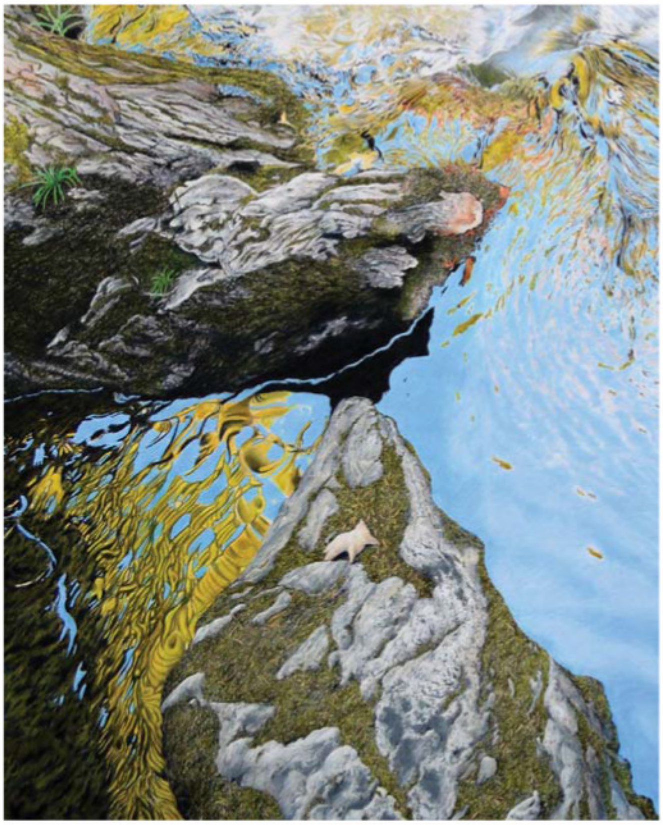
I'm usually able to visualize my compositions before starting a drawing; however, this waterscape presented too many variables. I decided the best approach was to break up the scene into four manageable parts: the waterfalls, the rocks, the currents, and downstream and final details. This simple plan helped me stay focused and keep my painting sessions organized.

PART 1: THE WATERFALLS

I turned my attention to the waterfalls since I knew that this area would likely become the focal point of the drawing. I shaped the falls and their swirls, shadows, lines and patterns using 2B and 6B graphite pencils. Once the sketch was refined, I began applying cool gray in 30 percent, 50 percent, 70 percent and 90 percent hues to build a base for shaping the water movements. Dark areas were treated with streaks of black and 90 percent cool gray to help separate the falls and add a sense of depth. Highlighted colors along the upper ridge were formed using yellow ochre, goldenrod, artichoke and bronze tones. Then I layered and blended touches of sky blue, light cerulean blue and true blue into the falls.

PART 2: THE ROCKS

The next stage involved developing the rocky landscape along the shoulders of the riverbed. This part of the drawing required hours of detailing because the rocks were full of crevices and covered with moss and small grassy plants. I decided to use pigment ink liners to build a foundation of textures. This provided me with a perfect layout to carefully add a wide range of colors—warm grays, light umber, dark umber, black and a generous selection of green hues—to form these elements.



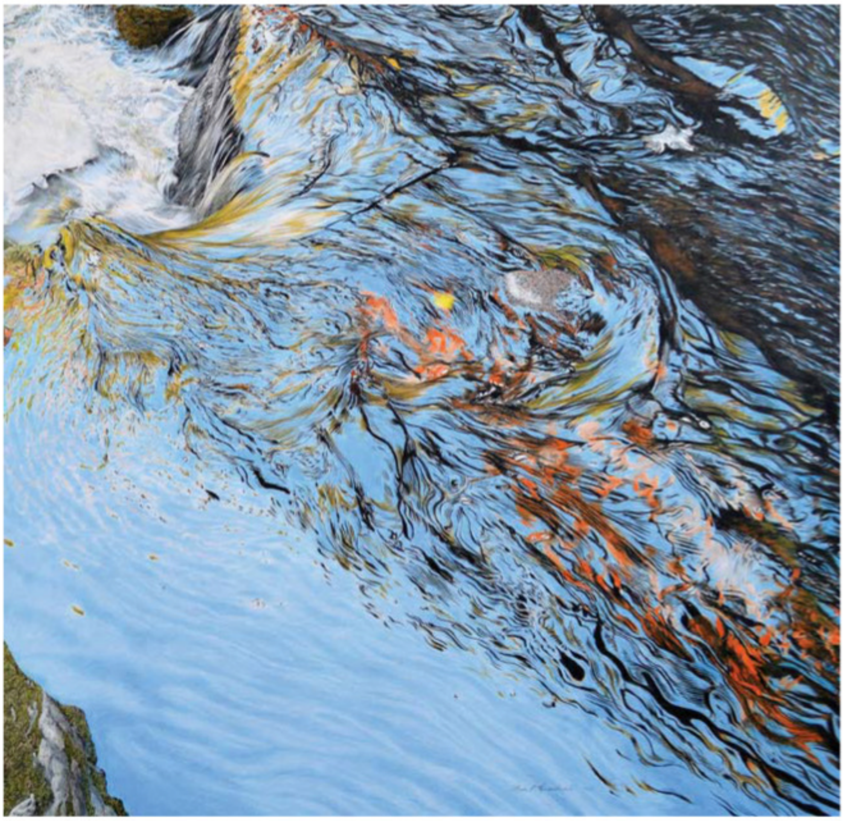
LEFT
Part 2: The Rocks
I developed the rocks (detail) using pigment ink liners to build up color and texture.

PART 3: THE CURRENTS

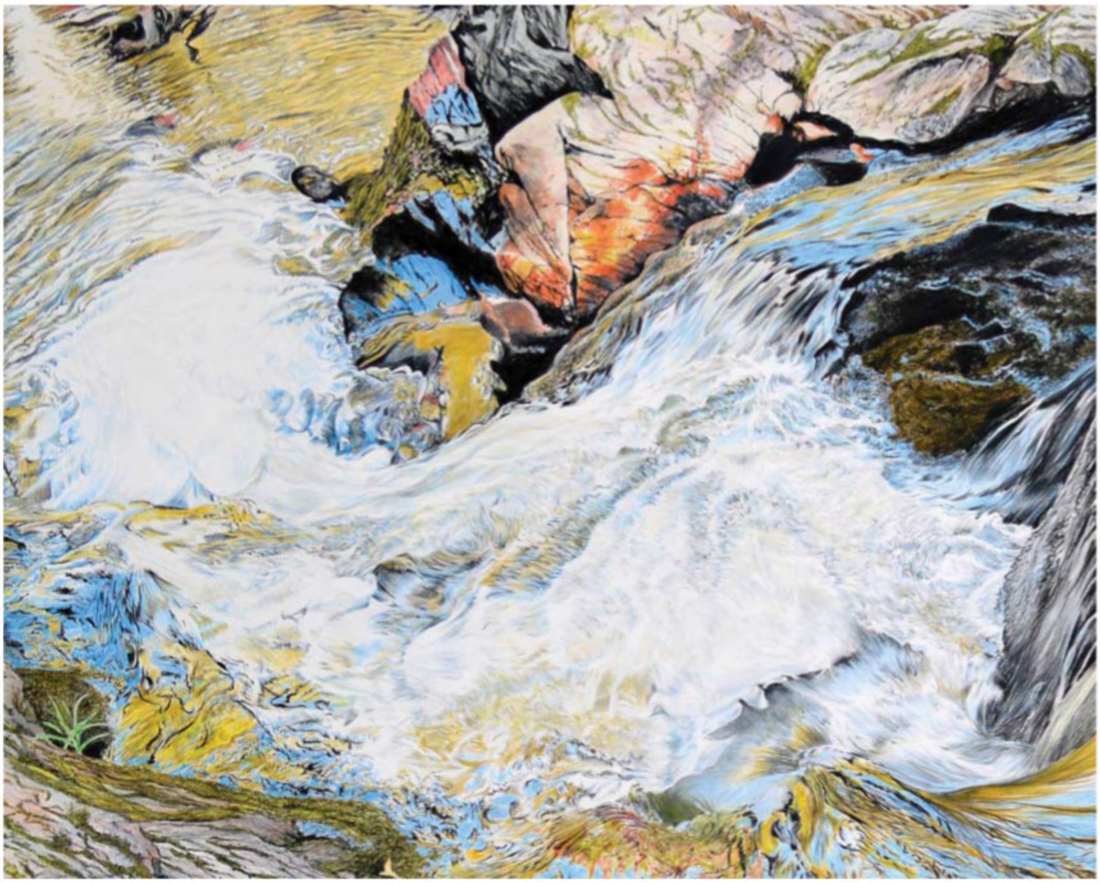
Working on the stream currents was a major challenge since this part of the scene covers so much of the paper. I started at the top of the waterfall and worked my way down. Swirling line patterns of varying thickness give the current a sense of movement. I used a combination of pigment ink liners and black colored pencil to build and define the shapes and shadows.

The light open areas were blended with applications of periwinkle, sky blue light, blue slate and light cerulean blue. As the currents began to take on life, I added colorful streaks of jasmine, yellow ochre, goldenrod, chartreuse, limepeel and bronze to create even more movement. Finally, touches of orange, sunburst yellow, peach and mineral orange were introduced to form the colorful highlight areas.

This part of the drawing increased my colored pencil consumption so dramatically that I had to place a recurring order with my art supply distributor.



BELOW
Part 3: The Currents
As the largest portion of the drawing, the stream currents (detail) presented the greatest challenge. Working from the top down, I drew in swirling line patterns to help create a sense of movement before building and blending multiple layers of color.



Part 4: Downstream and Final Details After shaping the waterfalls (detail) with graphite pencil, I applied various hues of cool gray to add dimension and depth to the scene. Then I added yellow-orange highlights across the upper ridge and blended touches of blue into the falls.

PART 4: DOWNSTREAM AND FINAL DETAILS

I originally thought creating the cascading water downstream would be easy, but working on an oversized drawing that often required moving the paper laterally, upside down and diagonally created a sense of uncertainty.

One of the most helpful steps was to take extra time during the sessions to make sure the stream currents were in harmony with the flowing currents and waterfall. My typical approach to drawing cascading water movements begins with color strokes using 30 percent cool gray and then slowly adding sky blue light and blue lake to the mixture to form the moving swirls. Adding an assortment of darker colors, including indigo blue, periwinkle and cool gray in 70 percent and 90 percent, helped to separate the light-flowing areas from the stream currents. The final touch was to use a selection of rich colors—yellow ochre, lemon yellow, goldenrod, chartreuse, limepeel and others—to showcase the reflective images along the flowing stream.

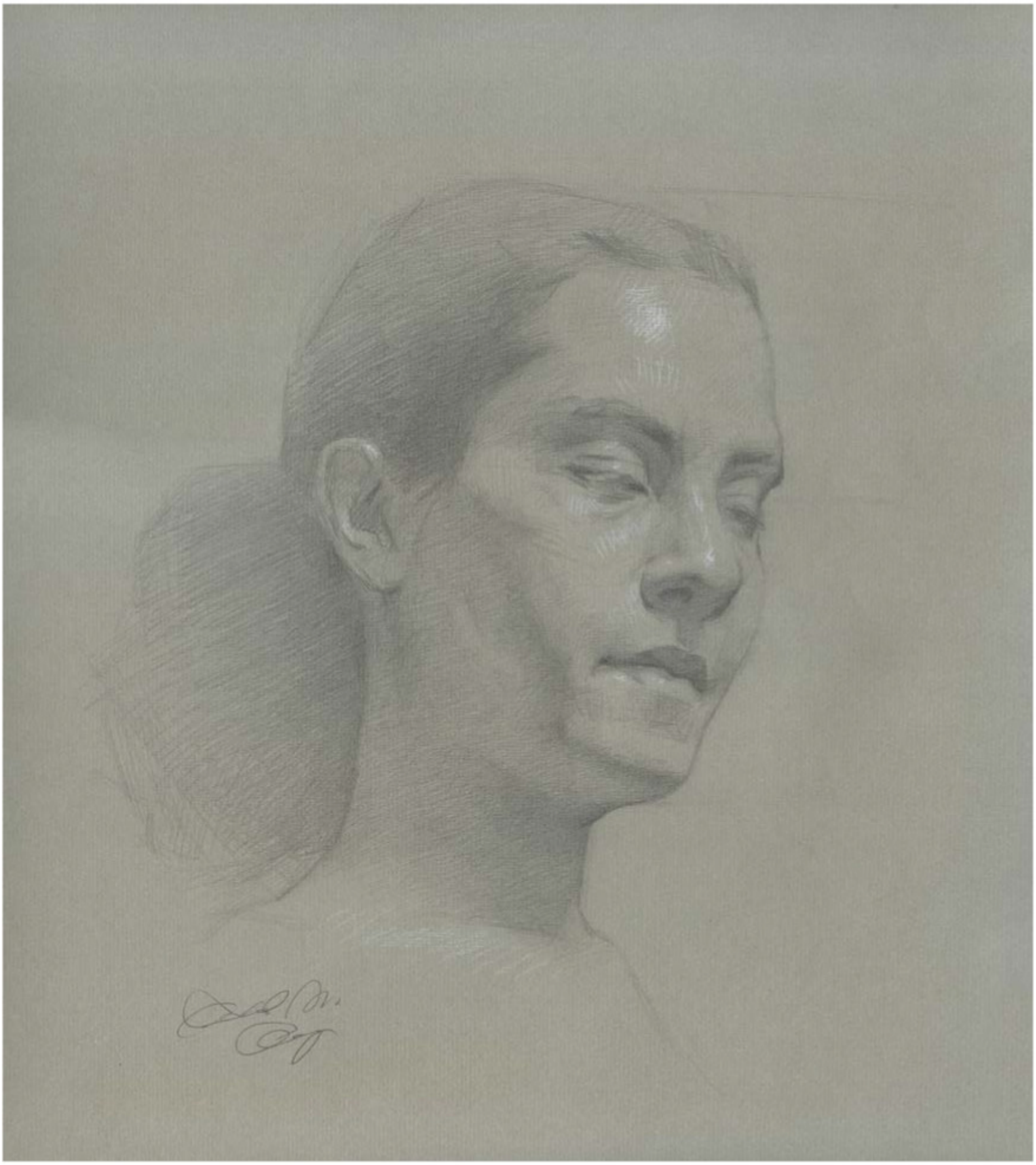
I revisited all areas of the composition to sharpen lines, refine shapes and burnish colors before I added my signature to the composition.

HANDLED WITH CARE

Saying goodbye to a drawing that had taken more than two months to complete wasn't easy, and I wanted to ensure the artwork would be safely delivered to the framer in Detroit. Since shipping the artwork by a carrier was out of the question, I decided to hand-deliver the piece to the framer, even though it meant eight hours of driving. As I began my journey back home, I couldn't help but feel a sense of relief and freedom. I could now resume a "normal" life again.

Erwin P. Lewandowski (erwinplewandowski.com) is an award-winning national artist who specializes in creating waterscape and landscape drawings with colored pencil, ink and graphite pencil. Working within several styles allows him to create artwork that's unique in style, meticulously rendered in detail, and visually appealing in form, content and composition. He's represented by a number of agents and has achieved Signature status from organizations in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom and Australia. The artist is a graduate of the Fine Arts Department at Central Michigan University.

OPTICAL VS. CONCEPTUAL



It's All in the Approach

To capture a convincing likeness, take both an optical and a conceptual approach to your drawing.

BY Todd M. Casey

When I work on a drawing, I take an optical approach to the piece based on what I see directly in front of me, as well as a conceptual approach based on what I know—either intuitively or from experience. Oscillating between these two methods will help you create a solid composition with a deep understanding of why we see what we see. Keep in mind that it's rare to operate via one method alone, but if you can compartmentalize each approach to focus on one task at a time, you'll be able to break down a drawing into a few simple stages.

My portrait *Sarah* (opposite), for example, was drawn from life over four, 20-minute sessions during which I used both optical and conceptual approaches. To achieve a successful outcome in your art, I suggest you work from life as much as possible and break your drawing down into the following four stages.

OPTICAL METHOD STAGE 1: BIG SHAPES

When starting a drawing, it's best to work optically, which means to copy what you see in front of you. This is a two-dimensional way of seeing, and you don't even have to recognize what it is you're looking at—just draw what you see.

I always begin by drawing the two-dimensional abstract shapes of light and shadow (see Optical Method Stage 1: Big Shapes, below). This only works, however, if you have clear shadow shapes. If you don't, you'll have to look for structural shapes or orbital structures.

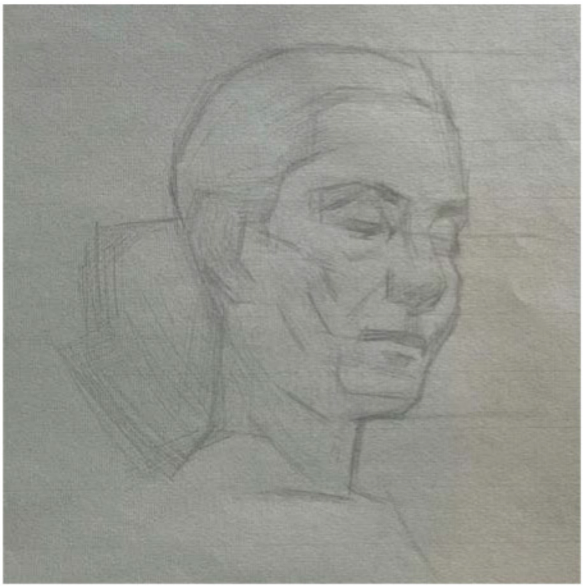
I make and measure marks on my surface, which allows me to shape the drawing and train my eye and hand. I aim for perfection but also understand that human judgment and execution are flawed. Those small flaws are what make a work of art unique.

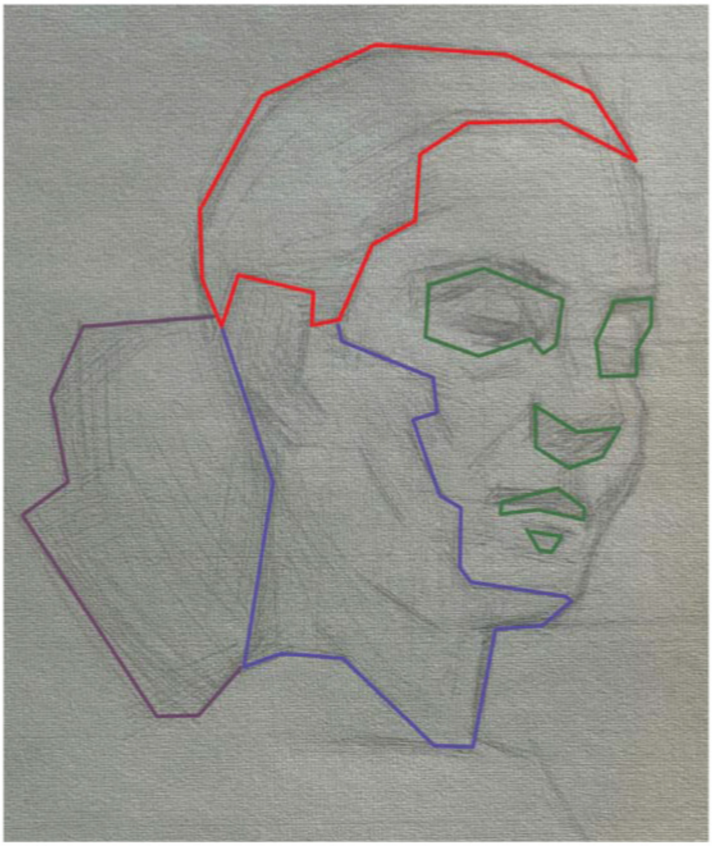
OPTICAL METHOD STAGE 2: SMALL SHAPES

The next stage involves refining the shapes (see Optical Method Stage 2: Small Shapes, page 22). I add some tone and value to the shadows to separate them from the light and make them more visible. This is sometimes referred to as a "chiaroscuro" effect. When the global shapes are accurate but still loose, I begin to refine them from general to specific.

Next, I study the hard and soft edges of the shadow shapes. Edges on the light side of the shadows are soft. This is known as "the terminator," which is an astronomical definition for the termination of light. A cast shadow will have a harder edge in relation to the terminator, so I build the contrast of these two lines in relation to each other. This is the beginning of recognizing the shapes in relation to the light source.

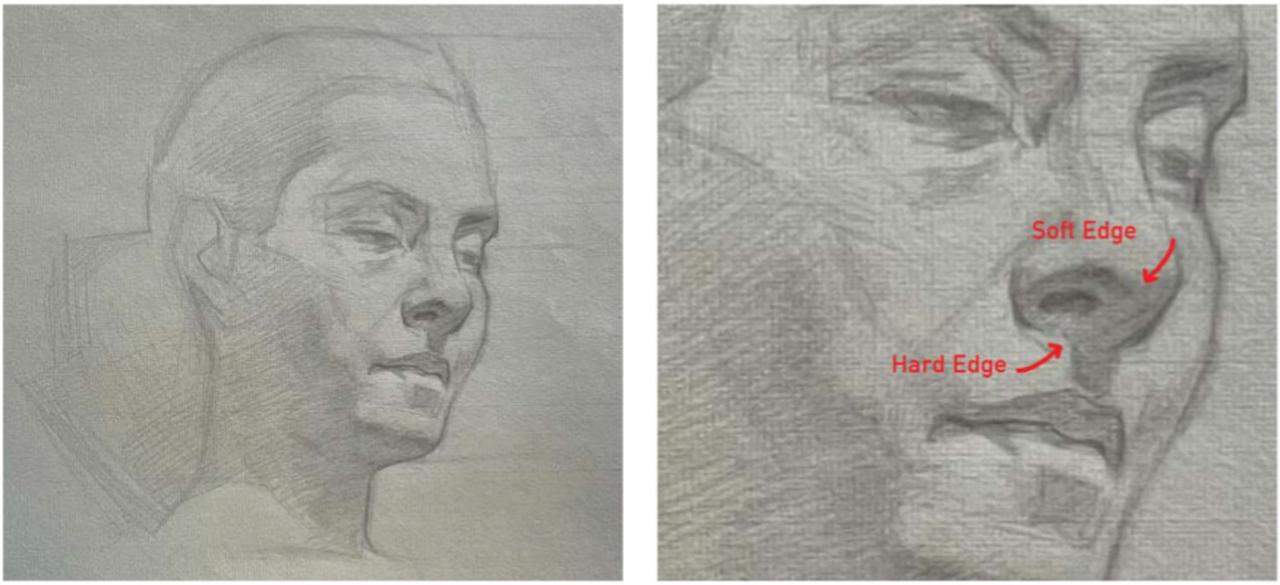
My approach to the drawing is now beginning to morph from an optical into a conceptual method.



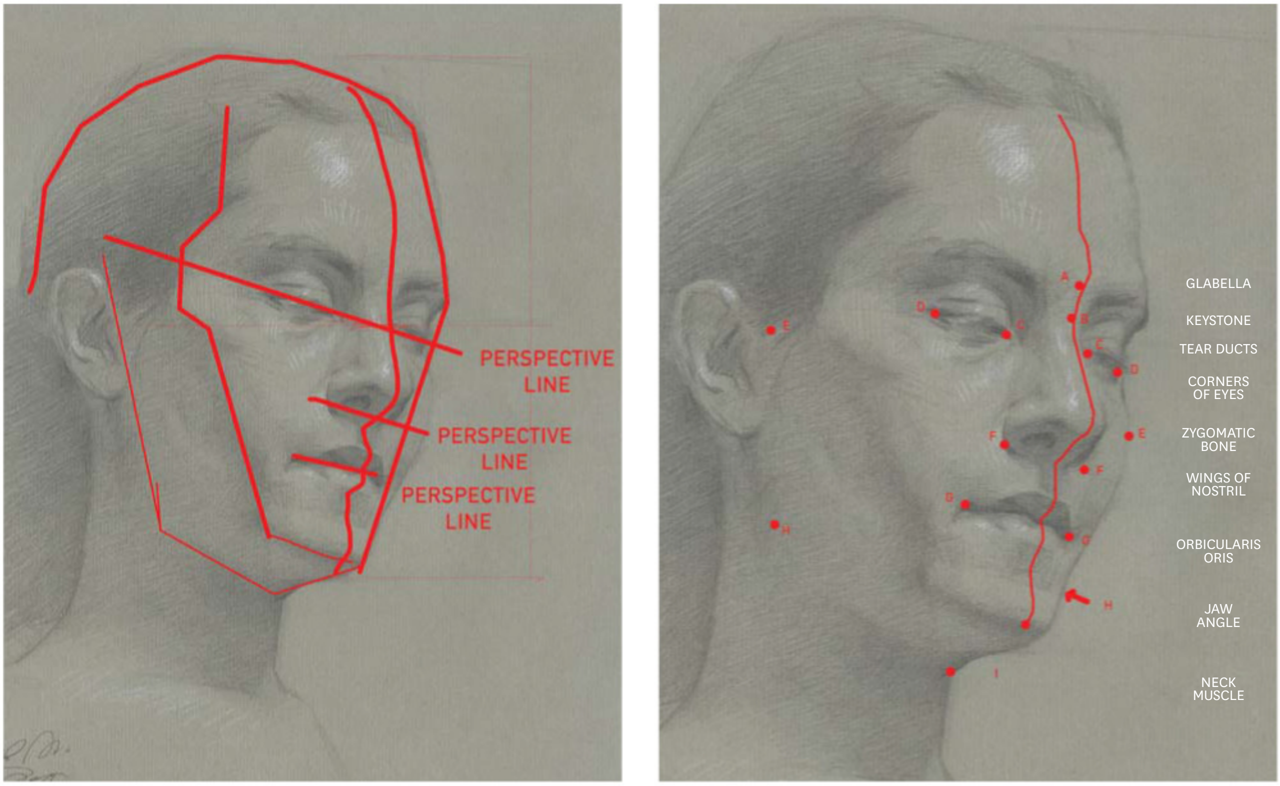


OPTICAL METHOD STAGE 1: BIG SHAPES
I begin by taking an optical approach to laying in the largest shapes. The image on the right shows those basic shapes blocked in as different colors to make it easier to see how the shapes intertwine.

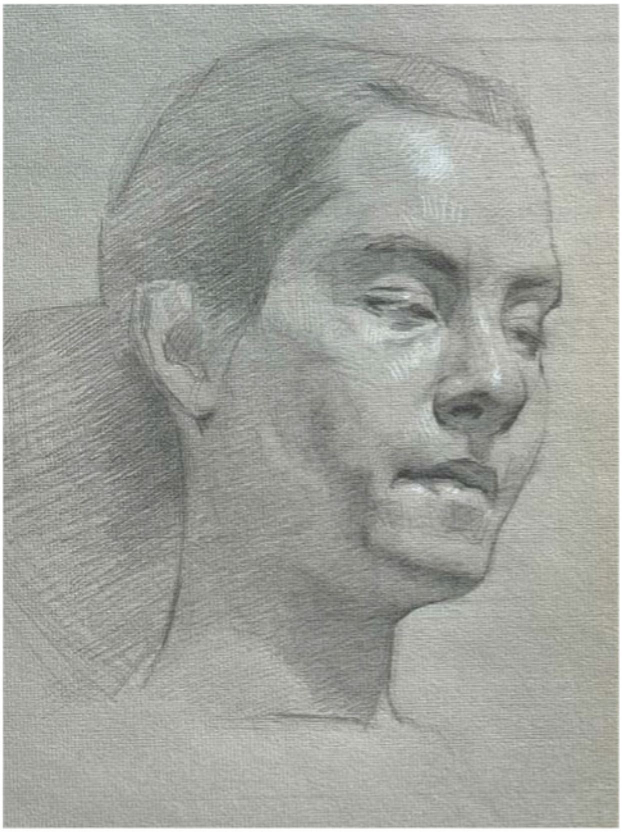
OPPOSITE
Sarah
(pencil on Hahnemühle
Ingres paper, 12x12)

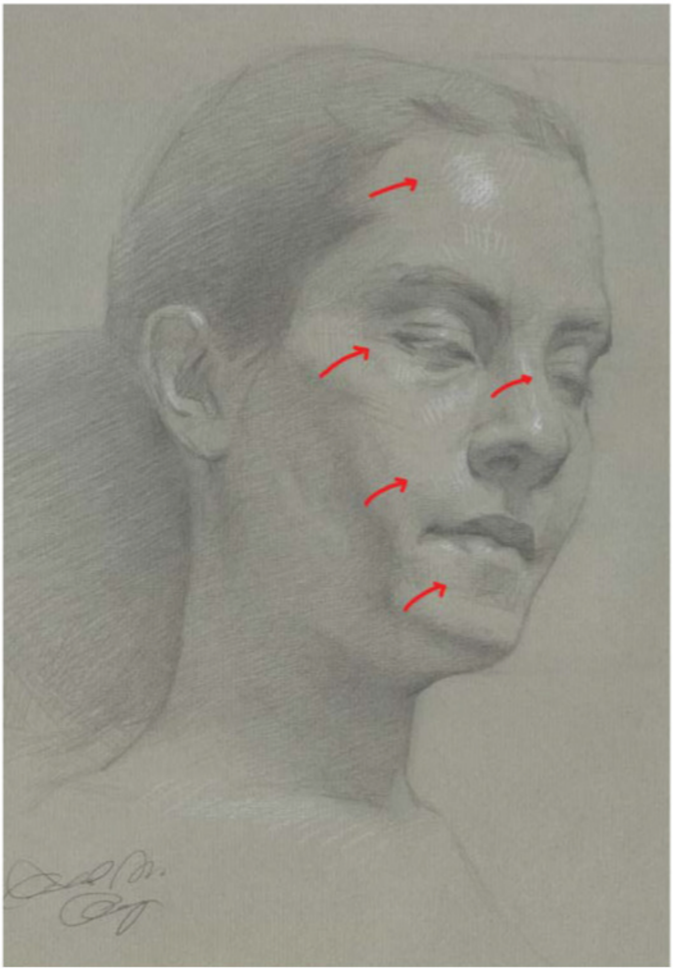

Soft Edge
Hard Edge

OPTICAL METHOD STAGE 2: SMALL SHAPES
I study the small shapes and shadow shapes, looking for just the right contrast of soft versus hard edges. I'm still applying an optical approach here, but beginning to make the move toward the conceptual method.


PERSPECTIVE LINE
PERSPECTIVE LINE
PERSPECTIVE LINE
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
I
GLABELLA
KEYSTONE
TEAR DUCTS
CORNERS OF EYES
ZYGOMATIC BONE
WINGS OF NOSTRIL
ORBICULARIS ORIS
JAW ANGLE
NECK MUSCLE

CONCEPTUAL METHOD STAGE 3: ENGINEERING
Applying a conceptual method refines the optical approach. Perspective lines (seen in the image on the left) help set the rotation of the head. Referencing an ovoid shape helps with visualizing the way a head rotates in space and how the center lines rotate. Referencing a skull, which lies beneath the surface of what we see, helps with the topography. I keep models of a skull and an ovoid shape on hand in my studio as references. In the drawing on the right, the basic facial structure is marked up to show the elements I look for when I draw a portrait:
A) glabella; B) keystone; C) tear ducts; D) corners of eye; E) zygomatic bone; F) wings of nostril; G) orbicularis oris; H) jaw angle; I) neck muscle.





CONCEPTUAL METHOD STAGE 4: MODELING
White chalk is added to depict the highlights and form light in the final stage of the drawing. The darker areas and shadows (indicated with red arrows in the image on the right) are modeled with a pencil. This allows the paper to be the middle tone.

CONCEPTUAL METHOD STAGE 3: ENGINEERING

I start thinking about a conceptual model that can fit over the whole drawing. In this case, that means checking the structure, perspective and anatomy of the head. I put on my engineer hat and begin to determine whether this face could exist in real life. I check the corners of the eyes and the tear ducts to make sure they're aligned on a perspective line. Then I do the same with the corners of the mouth and wings of the nostrils. Other landmarks I keep in mind are the glabella (the area between the eyebrows and above the nose), the center line of the head, the angle of the jaw and the zygomatic arch. This is essentially the symmetry of the head (see Conceptual Method Stage 3: Engineering, opposite).

If I had applied a conceptual model too early, it might have created a battle in my mind's eye between what I should see and what I actually see. Conceptual models are very general. An example of applying a conceptual model would be to place the eyes halfway between the top and bottom of the head. It's a fine general rule to follow, but it's not always true.

CONCEPTUAL METHOD STAGE 4: MODELING

The final stage involves modeling forms (see Conceptual Method Stage 4: Modeling, above). There's no point in modeling a drawing, though, if the structure isn't sound. It's common to want to jump right in, but the longer you wait, the better your drawing will be structurally.

I choose to draw on toned paper so the paper color can serve as my middle value. One thing to keep in mind when using a toned paper is to try not to have the dark and light values touch one another. Let the paper be the middle value, and you'll get better form. I begin modeling out of the shadows, starting with the halftones, and then work up toward the light source, with tonal progressions from dark to light.

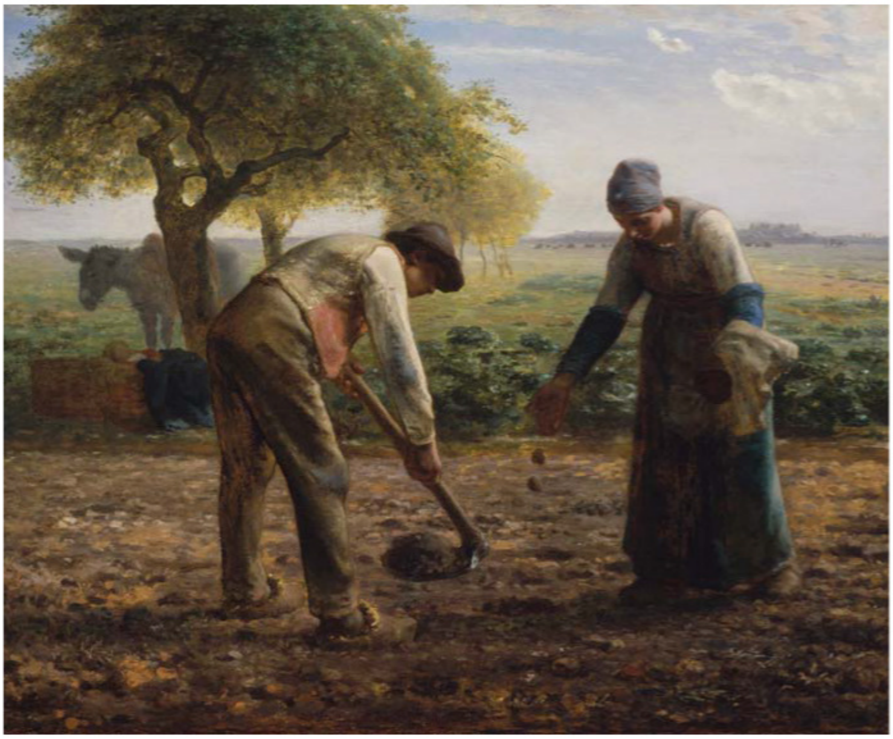
Taking both an optical as well as a conceptual approach to your artwork will help correct any potential deficiencies in either method and lead to a more successful final result. I've found this process to be essential to mastering subject matter of all kinds.

Todd M. Casey is an award-winning painter, a sought-after art instructor and author of the books The Oil Painter's Color Handbook *and* The Art of Still Life.

Get Real

Embrace the facts when painting everyday scenes.

BY Courtney Jordan



Potato Planters (ca 1861; oil on canvas, 32½x39¾) by Jean-François Millet
MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON, 17.1505

Accuracy Above All

Painting as a realist offers the opportunity to capture the lives of those around you and the times in which you live, making you—the artist—the expert. Your aim as a realist is to depict your surroundings in the most honest way possible. Don't pine for extraordinary scenes or bombastic occasions.

- To paint with a realist sensibility, close observation is key. Your goal should be to portray what's real—not what you *wish* was real—which requires a keen eye and sense of discipline. Spend time with your subject. Let your overall impressions sink in—and try to avoid making them more than what they actually are.
- A great way to complement your observations is to jot down the words that come to mind as you consider your subject. Is it a city scene that feels hectic and a bit grimy? A view of a kitchen table that feels somewhat banal yet familiar? Hold true to those impressions—and words—as you begin to sketch and build your painting.

Let in the Details … But Avoid Embellishing

There's room for artistic license when considering a scene and where to take it; however, it's imperative to set aside the imaginative or the idealized when working in a realist style.

- Beware of beautifying the details or intensifying the colors in order to make your work feel more powerful or dynamic. While these aren't wrong intentions, they're not quite right for realism. It's all about being factual, not aspirational.

Why It's Tough …

It can be somewhat challenging at times to land on a subject when the primary objective is not about finding something beautiful or sublime.

- When it comes to painting in realism, the goal is to capture an unvarnished slice of life that may not seem that earth-shattering or important. It can leave you wondering: Is this even worthy of a painting? It is—as long as you know what you're trying to communicate, such as empathy for a figure or an appreciation for a problematic issue.

… and Why It Matters

Realism's power is akin to the power of journalism—of taking in the world around you and then documenting it through your art.

- Embrace your world. The subject a great painter took for granted 300 years ago is one we find powerful today because of how true it feels, even if the scene is quite commonplace. An honest presentation can be a powerful tonic when everything else seems too grandiose or full of fabrication.

In Fine Company

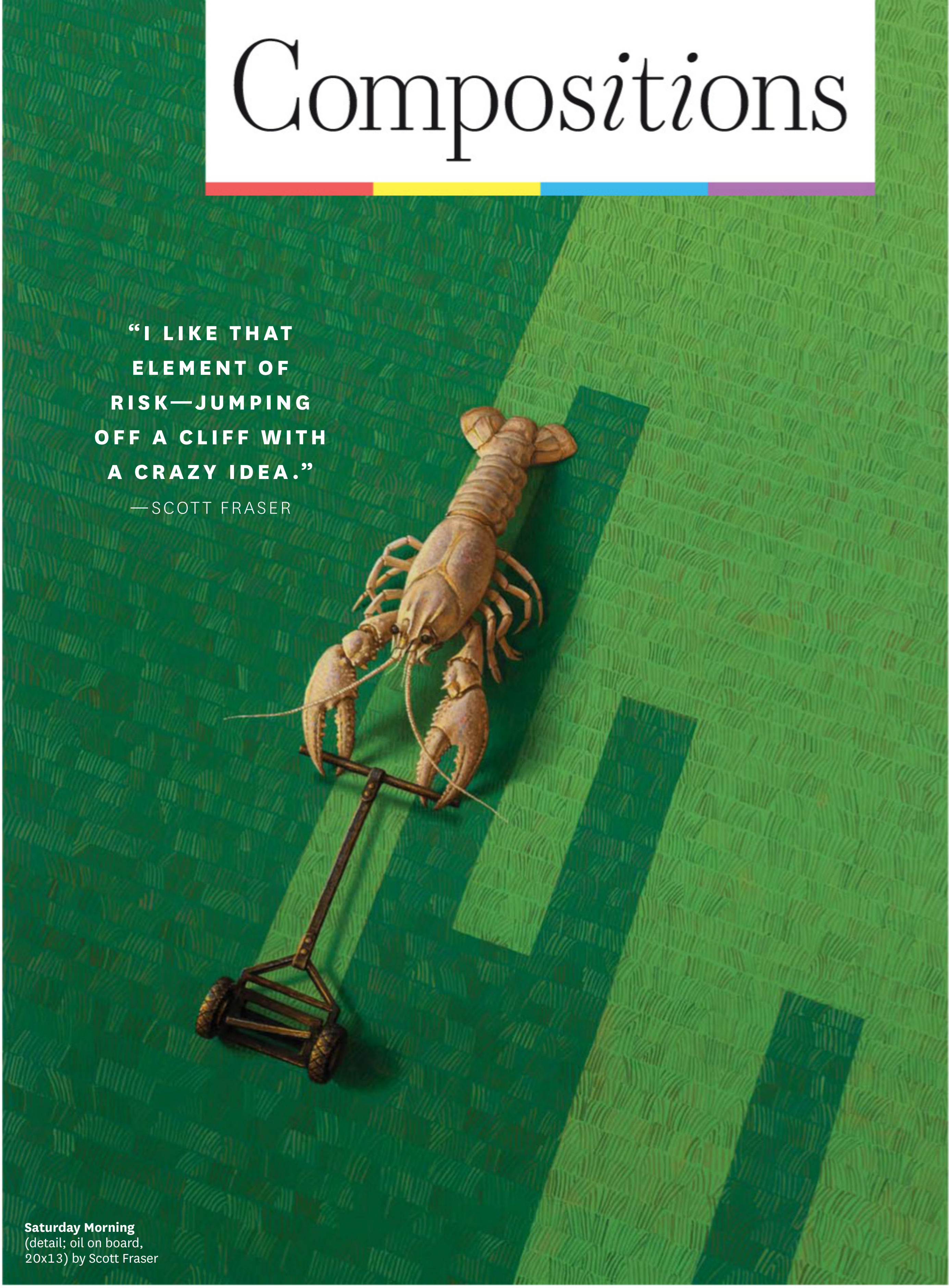
If you think there's no power in realism, think again. Consider the paintings of these realist powerhouses:

- Look to the light in works by Johannes Vermeer (Dutch, 1632–75) and observe how he elevated scenes of the ordinary.
- Study Jean-François Millet (French, 1814–75), noting the proportions of his subjects and the placement of horizon lines to see how truth meets monumentality.
- View the maritime compositions of Winslow Homer (American, 1836–1910) to discern how a carefully considered angle or grouping of objects and figures can have a powerful impact.

READER HACK

For a chance to win a free one-month membership to Artists Network (artistsnetwork.com), email your favorite art hack to info@goldenpeakmedia.com with this subject line: "Art Hacks." Submissions chosen for publication may be edited for length and clarity.

Compositions



> "I LIKE THAT ELEMENT OF RISK—JUMPING OFF A CLIFF WITH A CRAZY IDEA."
>
> —SCOTT FRASER

Saturday Morning (detail; oil on board, 20x13) by Scott Fraser

41st

ANNUAL ART COMPETITION

Every year, *Artists Magazine* showcases the creative excellence of emerging and established artists alike. As we head into a new decade of the competition, we celebrate the 15 talented prizewinners and 25 honorable mentions selected by our esteemed jurors from among many hundreds of worthy entries.

MEET THE JURORS

Animal/ Wildlife Category

DANA HAWK

Oil painter Dana Hawk specializes in animal and figurative work based in realism, leaning toward magical realism. She grew up in rural Missouri and attended Missouri State University, initially as an art student. She later changed her major to cell and molecular biology, and went on to earn a master's degree in physical therapy from the University of Colorado. She renewed her artistic pursuits part-time, in 2003, and eventually was able to pursue a full-time art career, in 2012. Hawk has since painted numerous commissions, and her other work—figurative and animal—has earned awards from The Portrait Society of America, *Beautiful Bizarre* magazine and the Art Renewal Center.

DANAHAWKSTUDIO.COM

Landscape/ Cityscape Category

ANDY EVANSEN

Andy Evansen began painting as a change of pace from his career as a medical illustrator almost 30 years ago, and he's now recognized as one of the top watercolor artists in the United States. The sought-after workshop instructor paints and teaches internationally. In addition to Signature Membership in the American Watercolor Society (AWS) and the Transparent Watercolor Society, he was elected as the only international member of England's Pure Watercolour Society, in 2022. Evansen's paintings have won numerous awards, including the AWS Bronze and High Winds Medals.

EVANSENARTSTUDIO.COM

Portrait/ Figure Category

RON HICKS

Denver-based artist Ron Hicks began his career as a representational artist using a traditional approach modeled after the style of 19th-century masters. His current body of work has evolved into a blend of disciplines that marries abstraction and realism to create figural art that stirs an emotional response. Hicks' artistic acuity was recognized in his youth, which led to scholarships to continue his educational journey at the Columbus College of Art & Design, in Columbus, Ohio, and the Colorado Institute of Art, in Denver. The artist has enjoyed a number of solo exhibitions during his career spanning more than 25 years, and his work is part of collections across the U.S. and abroad.

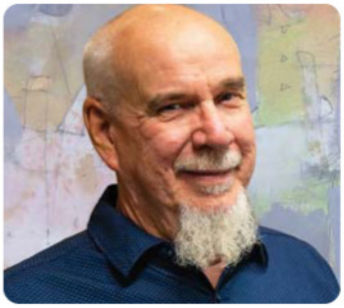
RONHICKS.COM

Still Life/Floral/ Interior Category

MELISSA HEFFERLIN

In more than three decades as a professional artist, Melissa Hefferlin has focused about half of her creative energy on still life, inspired by her passion for the formal and narrative possibilities of the genre. A proponent of both classic and progressive interpretations of the form, she admires beautiful tableaux and masterful technique. Hefferlin's artistic training includes studies at Russia's historic Academy of Art, in 1990–91, during the country's Soviet period. She also studied at Otis/Parsons Art Institute, in Los Angeles, and at the University of Tennessee. The award-winning artist is a Signature Member of the Pastel Society of America and the Association of Pastel Painters of Spain, and an Associate Member of Oil Painters of America and American Women Artists. Hefferlin's work—alongside that of her husband and son—is featured in a new book, *Parallel Journeys*.

MELISSAHEFFERLIN.COM

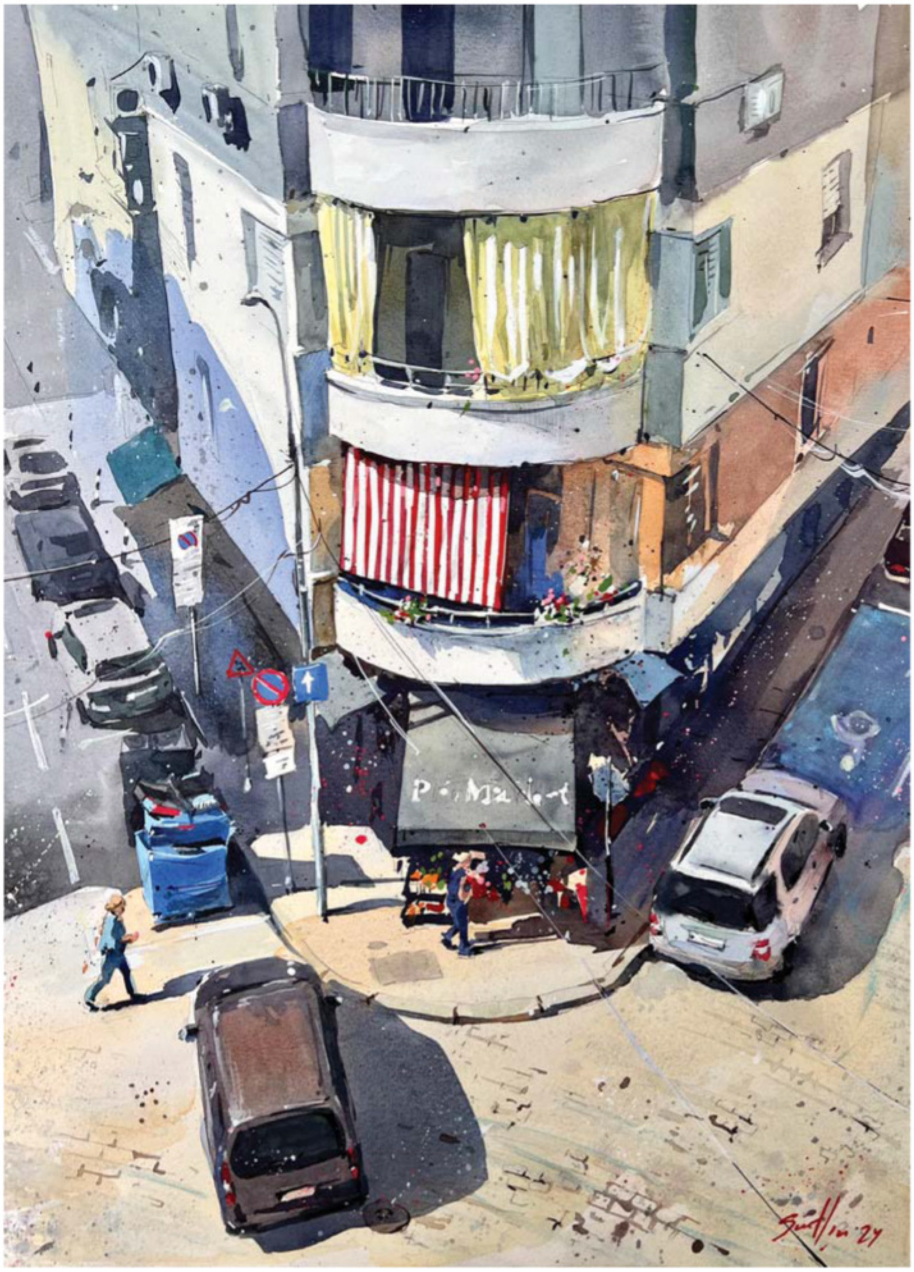


Abstract/ Experimental Category

STAN KURTH

Artist and workshop instructor Stan Kurth has drawn and painted most of his life. Before he even started school, an aunt, who was both an artist and art instructor, was an important artistic influence. Kurth lives with the conviction of "fear not," and that same attitude permeates not just his life but his art. Dedication to his work has earned him numerous awards and Signature Membership in several watercolor societies, as well as Master status in the National Watercolor Society and the Western Federation of Watercolor Societies. The artist currently lives in Arizona, and travels widely to teach "intuitive painting" workshops in watermedia and mixed media.

STANKURTH.COM



"This painting displayed all the criteria for a top award winner: skill, originality, creativity, adept handling of the medium, design and impact. I love the bold vantage point, which requires a great amount of skill to draw, and the artist's confidence to create convincing shapes without getting carried away, most evident in the way the vehicles are depicted. Not one thing is overstated. The more I studied this painting, the more impressed I became. The brushstrokes on the striped curtains alone kept me entertained."

—ANDY EVANSEN, JUROR

FIRST PLACE

SVETLIN SOFRONIEV

Sofia, Bulgaria

The Corner (watercolor on paper, 21x16)

What was your inspiration for *The Corner*?
My inspiration was an everyday scene from—at first glance—an unsightly cobble city street in Sofia. At the same time, the scene was full of light and life. The dynamism of the composition, the perspective from the unusual point of view and the red stripes grabbed my attention.

What stands out for you about the painting?
Because the scene isn't overly complex, I didn't burden myself with expectations and instead worked freely without going into detail.

SVETLINSOFRONIEV.COM

@SOFRONIEV.ART

SECOND PLACE

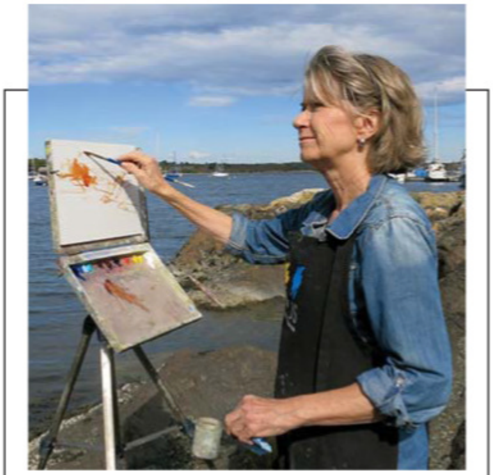
DEBORAH TILBY

Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

Misty Sea (oil on panel, 24x24)

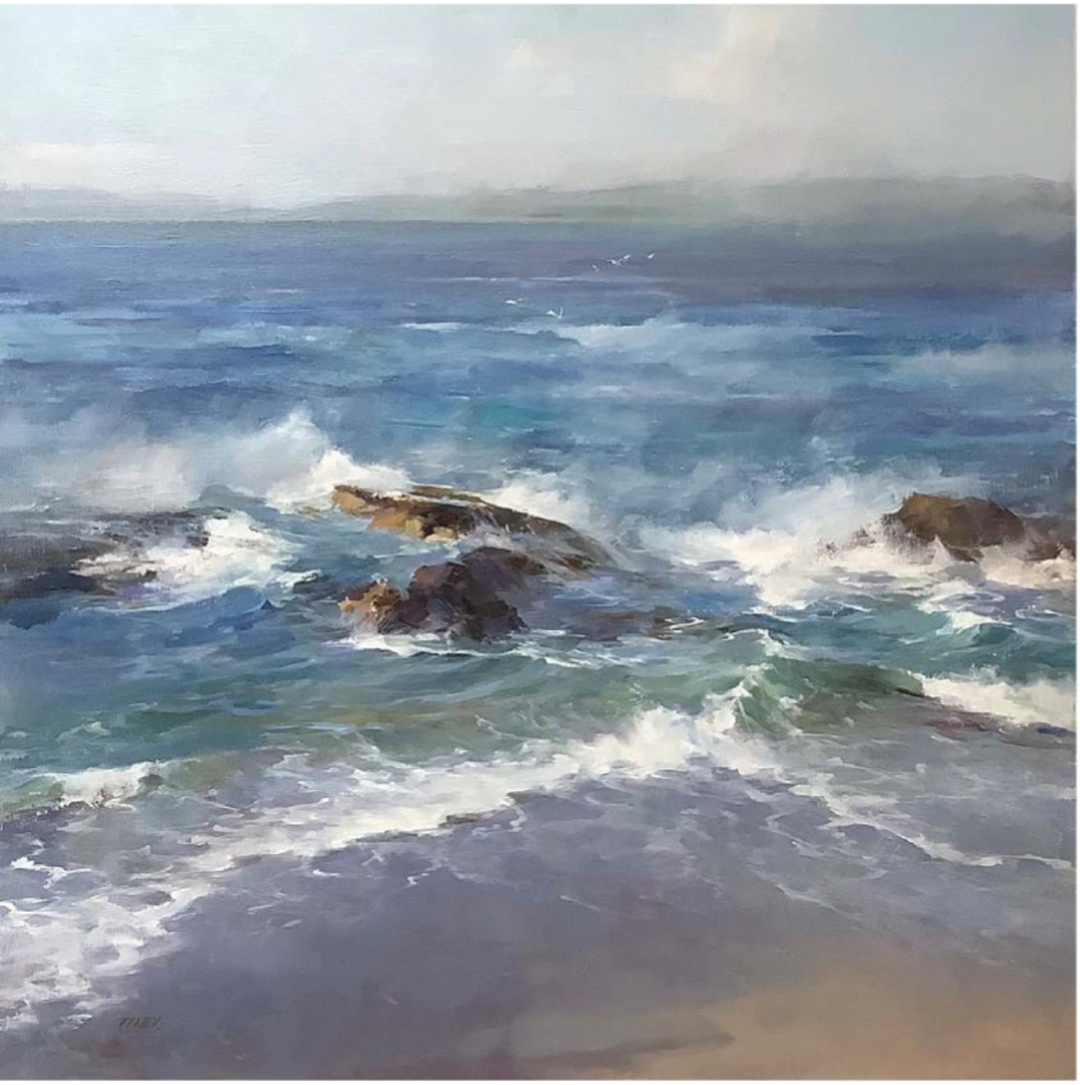
What was your inspiration for *Misty Sea*?
I live on the southern tip of a large island and have views such as this on my walks every day. The first thing that attracted me was the pattern the receding waves made on the sand. I was then drawn in by the soft, subtle colors.

What stands out for you about the painting?
This piece originally had a more well-defined headland in the distance and wasn't, in fact, a foggy scene at all. I felt it was looking too stiff and lacking in atmosphere, so I brought the cloud down and enveloped much of the distance and middle distance in mist. I was pleased to be able to capture the feeling of the mist coming off the water.



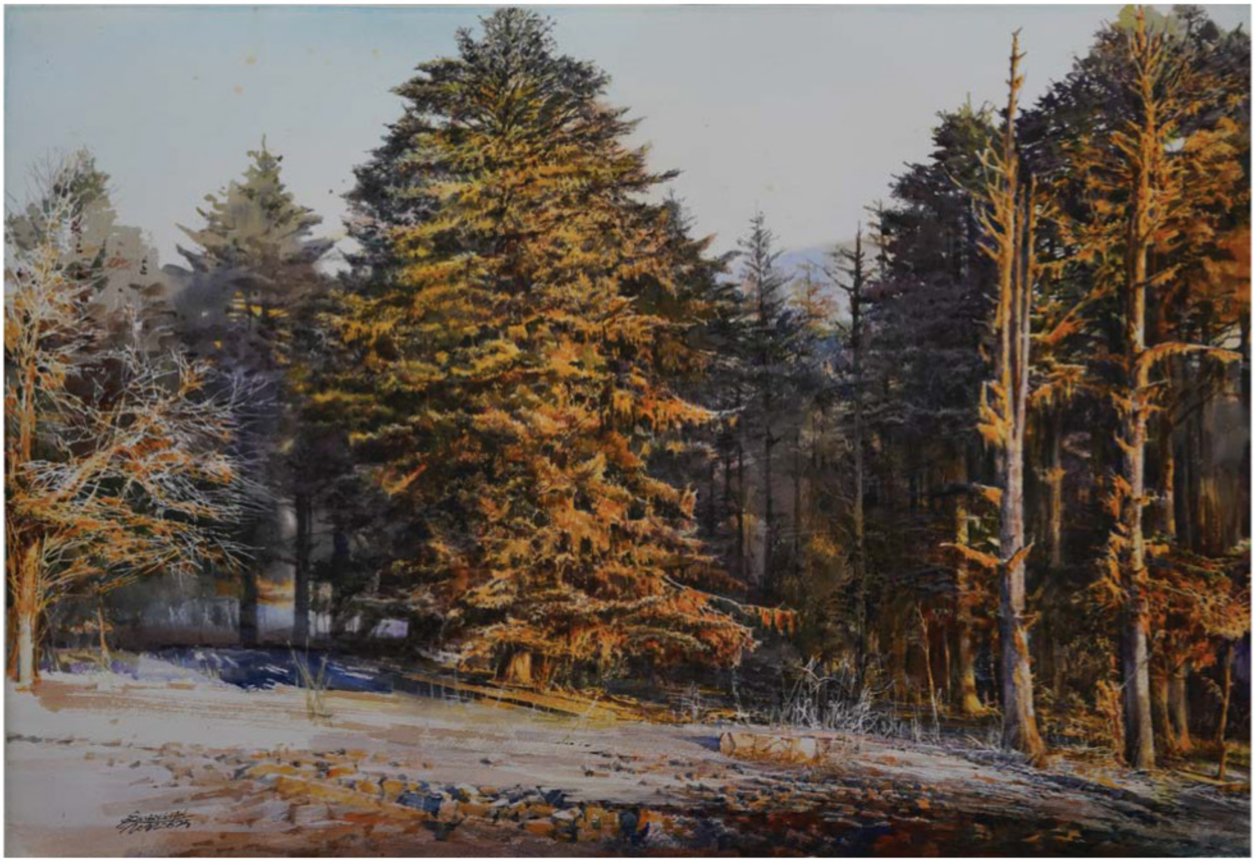
DEBORAHTILBY.COM

@DEBORAHTILBY



"This is a wonderful painting that somehow manages to capture both the energy and calmness of the sea. The design brings the viewer in and helps the eye travel through the entire composition. There are beautiful color transitions in the waves, and I love how I can feel the chaotic motion of water in those areas among the rocks. Painting water convincingly is so difficult, but this artist rose to the challenge."

—ANDY EVANSEN, JUROR



THIRD PLACE

YAN LIANG

Leshan City, Sichuan Province, China

Frozen Soil (watercolor on paper, 21¼x31¾)

What was your inspiration for *Frozen Soil*?
In the winter of 2021, on a hill at an altitude of nearly 3,000 meters, the soil had frozen as hard as iron, and the beauty and noise of summer had turned into a withered yellow. Only the fir trees—proud and resolute—grew in this frigid climate. Through observation at different time periods, I decided to choose the morning light environment as my painting lighting effect. The colors are warm and the air is cold. This seemingly misplaced polyphonic visual effect fully reflects what I wanted to express. The painting encapsulates my thoughts and symbolizes the stoicism of people facing major world changes and an uncertain future during a pandemic.

What stands out for you about the painting?
At that time I painted it, my country was still in a "special period," with many uncertain events happening frequently. Faced with too much impermanence, I could only choose to root firmly and grow strong, much like the tree in this painting.

"It's absolutely incredible how this artist managed to paint such a convincing work and maintain a painterly feeling. At first glance it appears photorealistic, but when you notice the second layer of trees and the wonderful little frost-covered grasses and branches, you realize the skill involved in simplifying the scene. Each tree is given a unique character that speaks to the artist's observational skills, and we can feel the extra weight of the frozen moisture on that beautiful pine. The rich, colorful darks in the shadows are beautiful." **—ANDY EVANSEN, JUROR**

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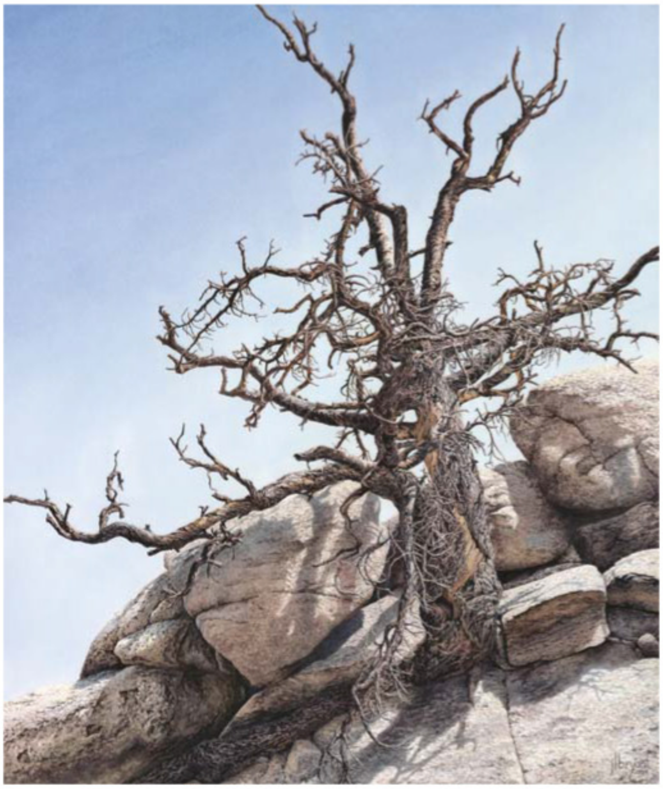
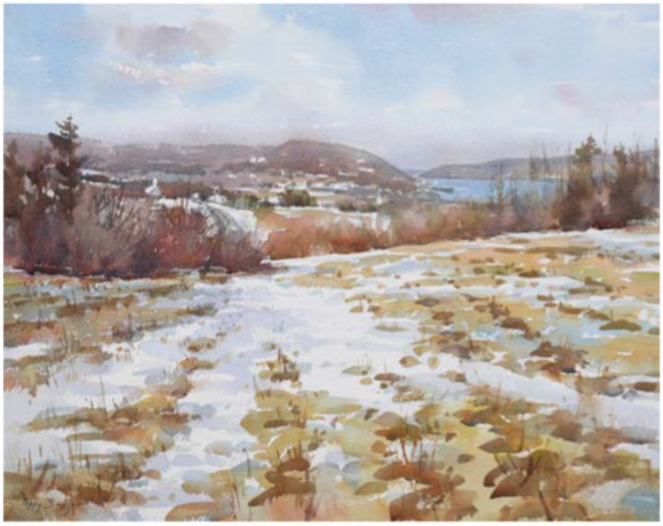
HONORABLE MENTIONS



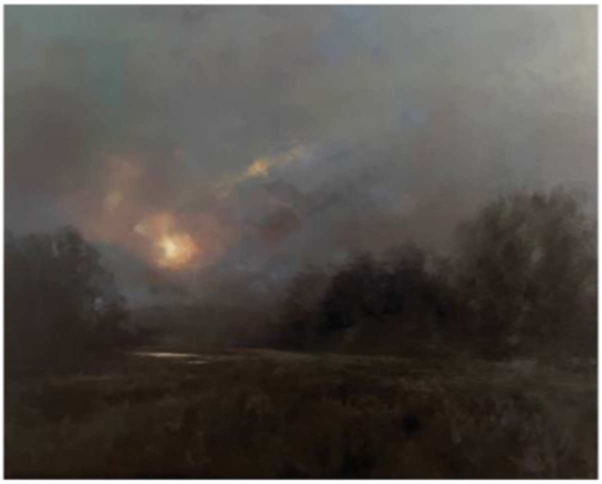
JESSICA L. BRYANT
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
jessicabryant.com
@jessica.l.bryant

Persistence
(watercolor on paper, 26x22)



POPPY BALSER
Acaciaville, Nova Scotia, Canada
poppybalser.com
@poppybalser

Spring Peeking Through
(watercolor on paper mounted on panel, 16x20)



MEGAN WHITFIELD
Chula Vista, California
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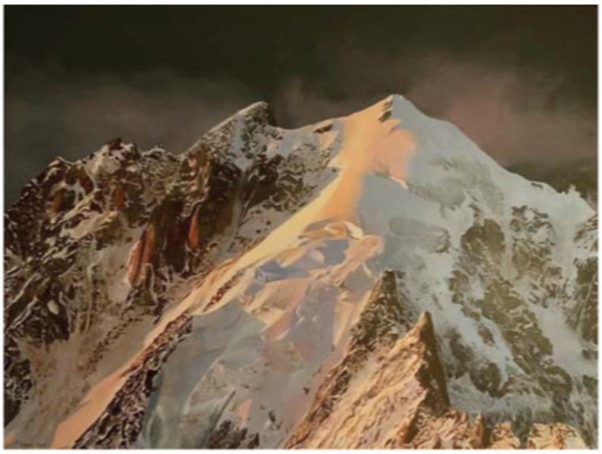
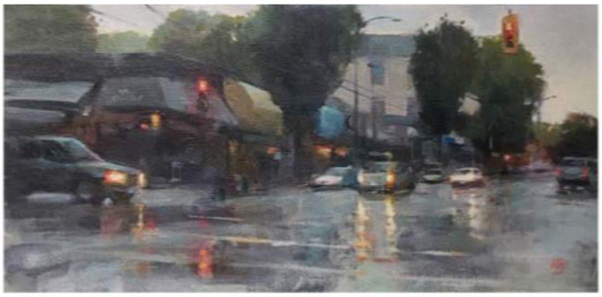
@m.whitfield.artist

Abalone
(acrylic on canvas, 16x20)



PATRICK EGGER
Valais, Switzerland
artpegger.jimdofree.com

Aurore sur l'Aiguille Verte (Mont-Blanc)
(acrylic on canvas, 24x32)



ANDREW MCDERMOTT
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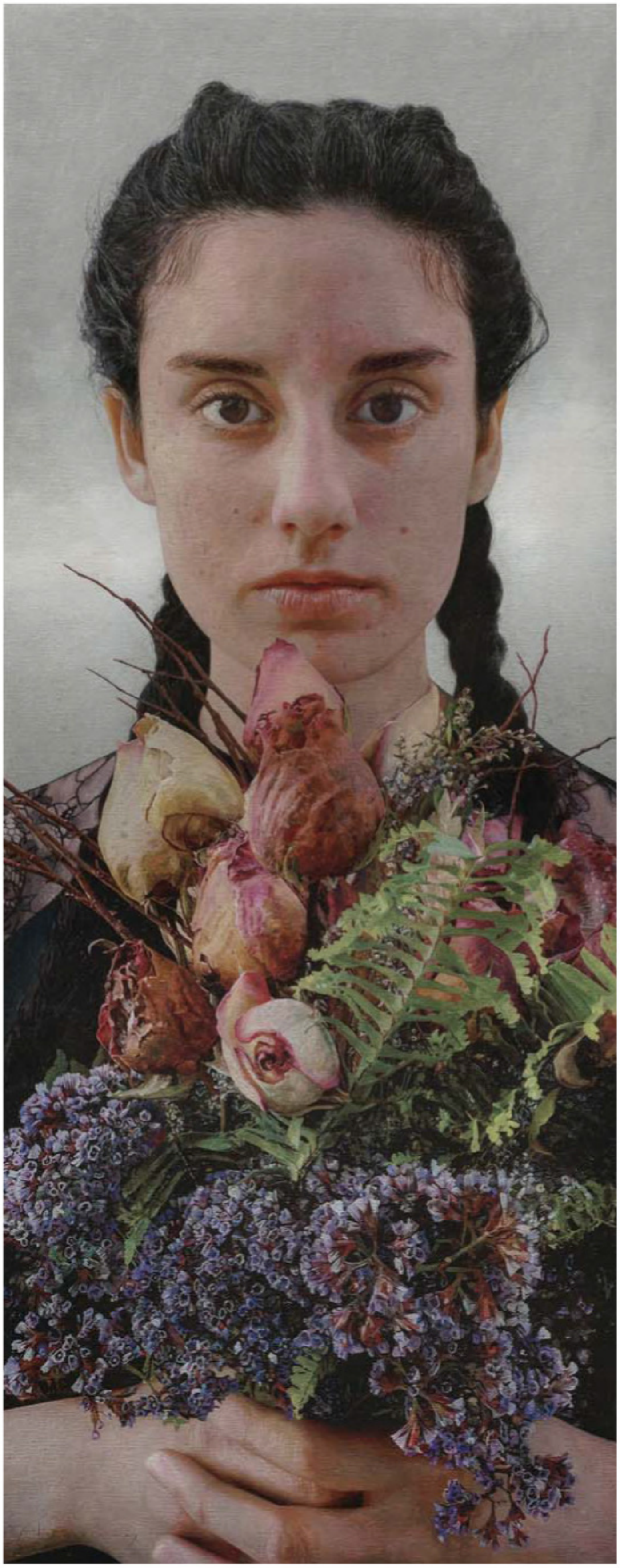
Wet Day on Dunbar
(acrylic on canvas, 8x17)



FIRST PLACE

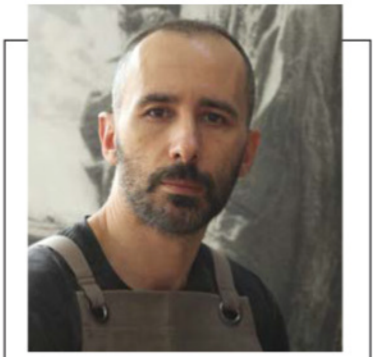
MARCOS REY

Arequipa, Peru

El Ramo (oil on linen, 55x21½)

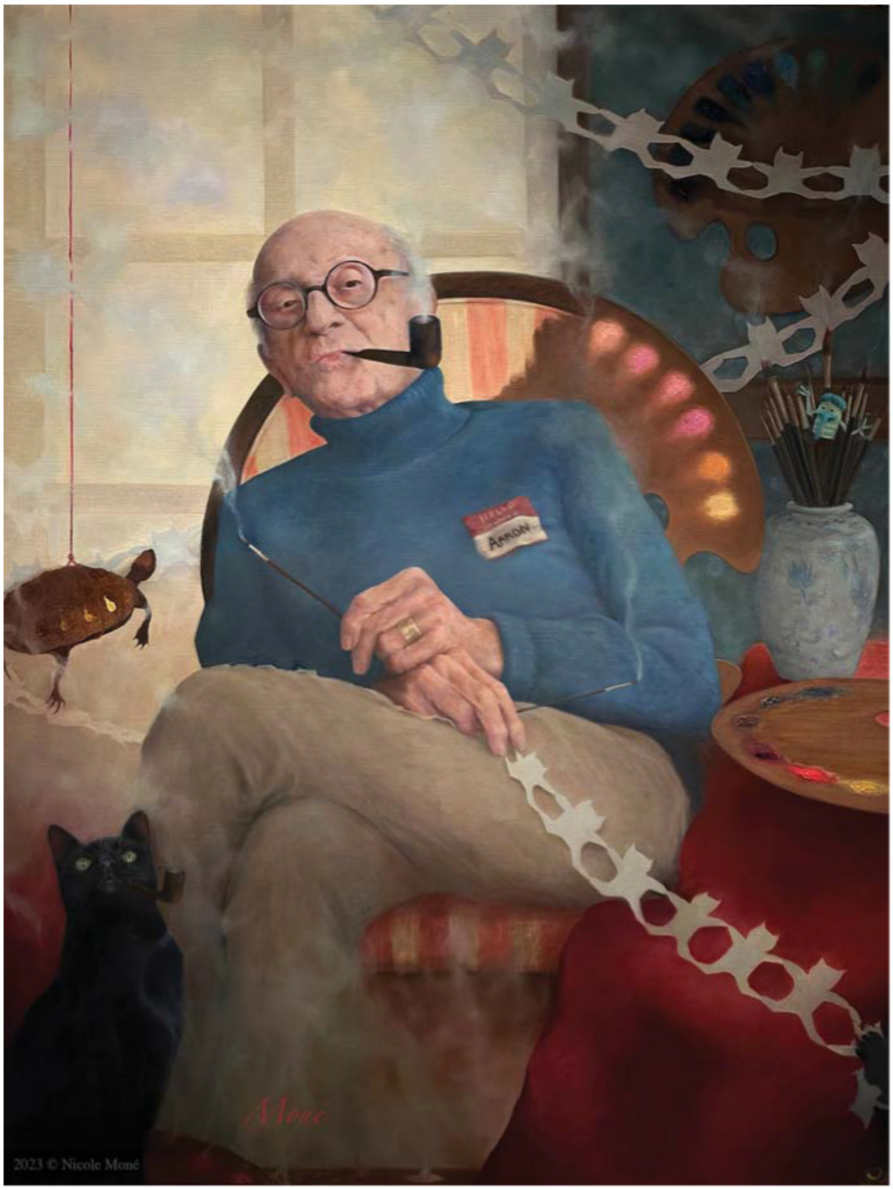
What was your inspiration for *El Ramo*? The idea for this painting came from my childhood memories—women dressed in mourning for the loss of a close relative. They'd wear black clothes for at least a year. It was very common to see older women dressed in black, but to see young women clothed in black had a huge impact on me, especially because of the contrast between the atavistic and the beautiful.

What stands out for you about the work? It's a visually powerful piece that creates a direct link with the viewer through the gaze of the protagonist. I wanted to take a bit of a risk with the format—which was inspired by the famous posters by artist Alphonse Mucha [Czech, 1860–1939]—to add drama and a certain theatricality.



MARCOSREY.ES

"My first impression of this work was the technical accuracy and attention to detail. I enjoyed the vertical composition in which the artist struck a wonderful balance in the relationship of shapes and color—quiet to more complex passages and subtle transition in color, and desaturated vs. chromatic. Just as important, if not more, I found the connection with the young lady's impassive expression compared to the beautiful floral arrangement quite delightful." —**RON HICKS, JUROR**



SECOND PLACE

NICOLE MONÉ

New Castle, New York

Pipe Dream (oil on linen, 40x30)

What was your inspiration for *Pipe Dream*? It's possible that many artists reading this are already familiar with the subject of my painting, Aaron Shikler—the world-renowned titan of painting [American, 1922–2015]—and a dear friend. Over the last few years, I've often wished that Aaron could see my new studio. Were he still here, I know that we would laugh over tea and chocolate as we brainstormed far-fetched scenarios that could lead to a new painting depicting inside jokes. I can easily imagine him joking and posing with funny props, as my other friends have, for a painting in my ongoing series. *Pipe Dream* is sort of a collaboration with Aaron based on a vivid dream in which he visited and chatted with me. Though it was wonderful to imagine that he'd actually paid me a visit, it was a pipe dream—featuring an actual pipe.

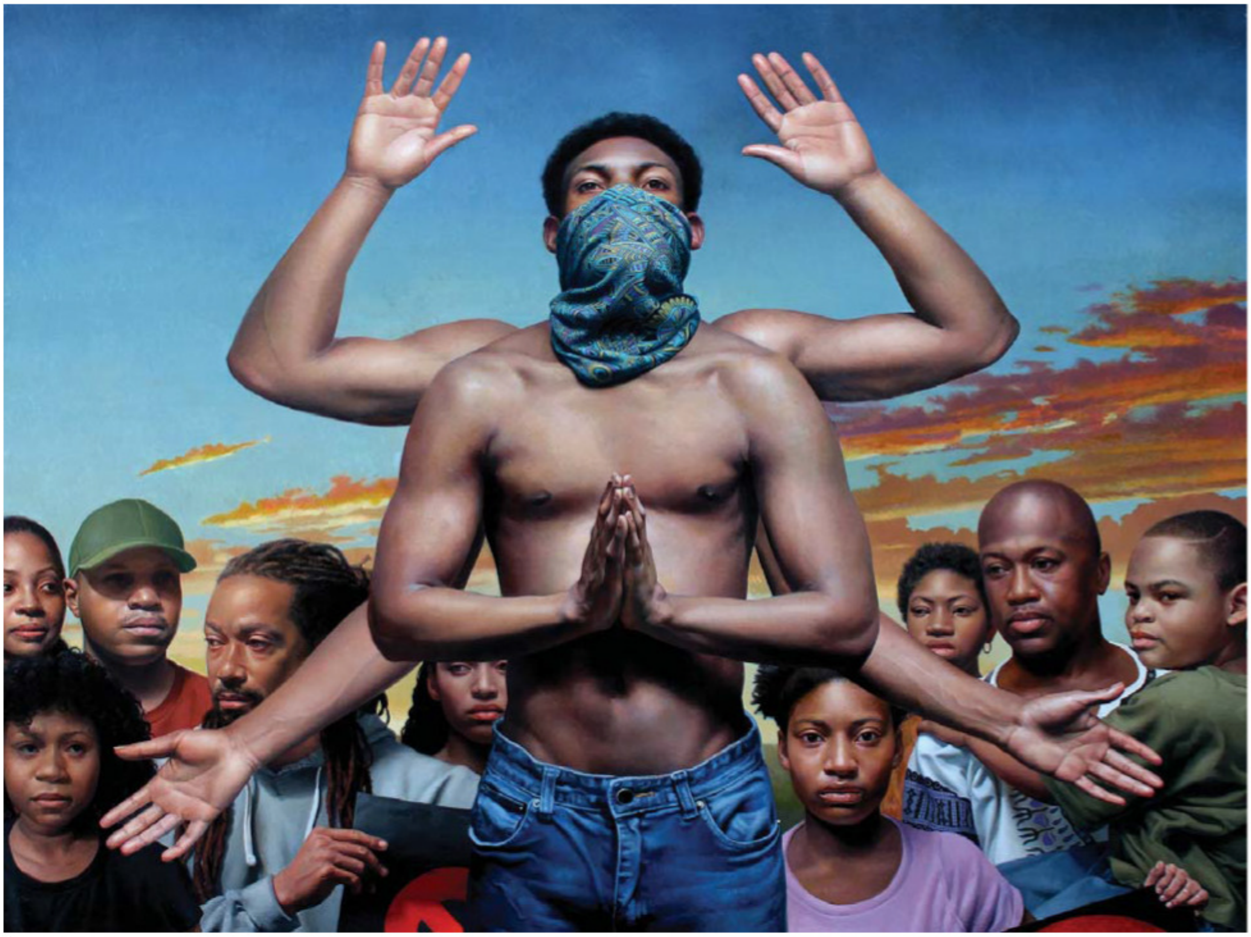
What stands out for you about the painting? I painted roughly 80 percent of the image rather quickly, and then the canvas sat untouched for nearly a year. I suppose I was hoping that if I didn't finish the painting, Aaron might "visit" again to chide me into action. Unfortunately, that wasn't the case. All this time later, it still feels like that dream was a real visit. I finally convinced myself to complete the painting and enjoy being in the studio "with Aaron" again. We've gotten to attend shows together again, too. And, of course, on the off chance Aaron can see this, he should know he's always welcome to visit again any time. I'll keep the tea and chocolate ready.

NICOLEMONE.COM

@NICOLEMONEFINEART

"This work, aside from its wonderful execution, caught my attention for many reasons, mainly curiosity. Its title and symbolic repetition caused me to ponder the meaning: What's the connection with the cat and turtle? Is this a whimsical interpretation directly from the artist's mind? If so, what does this mean? In the end, I guess it really doesn't matter. What it does do is draw one into the piece to start the conversation. In my opinion, this is what art should do."

—RON HICKS, JUROR



THIRD PLACE

RUSSELL HARRIS

Chicago, Illinois

Ubuntu (oil on linen mounted on wood, 22x28)

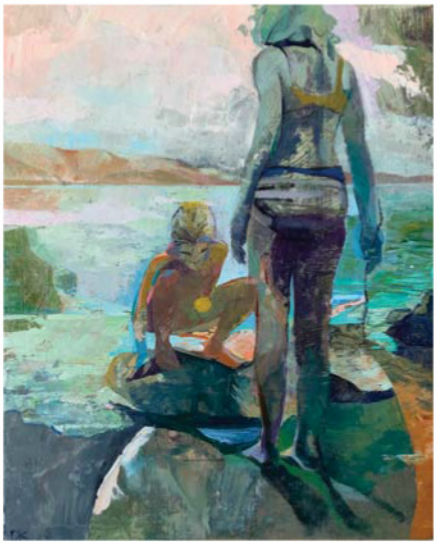
RUSSELLHARRISART.COM

What was your inspiration for *Ubuntu*?
"Ubuntu," a South African term meaning togetherness, beautifully captures the spirit of unity that Black communities have demonstrated throughout the years in their quest for change. The central figure in this painting represents a guardian of the people, someone who prays for and protects those who strive for equity. Creating this artwork allowed me to express my deep-seated beliefs and the values that have shaped me as an individual and guided me in raising my three children.

What stands out for you about the painting?
What makes this painting particularly special to me is that I used my children and my wife as models, transforming it into a true family portrait enriched by the presence of friends as well. My son is the central figure, and I'm amazed by how many people can recognize him, even with most of his face covered by a mask.

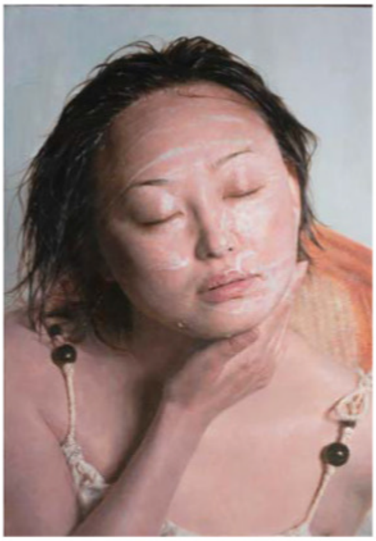
"This multifigured work is painted quite nicely and accurately depicted. My first thoughts were centered around the connection of the collective group of individuals with the central figure. The figure has three sets of arms that are seemingly open (or receiving), praying and praising. What a powerful piece!" —**RON HICKS, JUROR**

HONORABLE MENTIONS



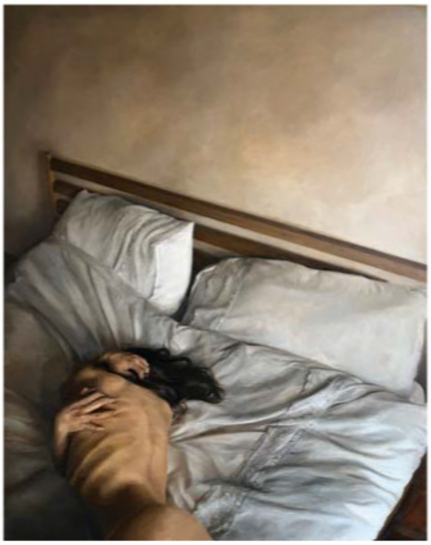
DENISE KLITSIE
Gardnerville, Nevada
@deniseklitsiepainter

2 Figures
(oil on canvas mounted on board, 13x11)



JIE CAI
Jericho, New York
@jiecai.24

Floating Life No. 5
(oil on linen, 23½x15¾)



MAI GUREWITZ
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maigurewitz.com
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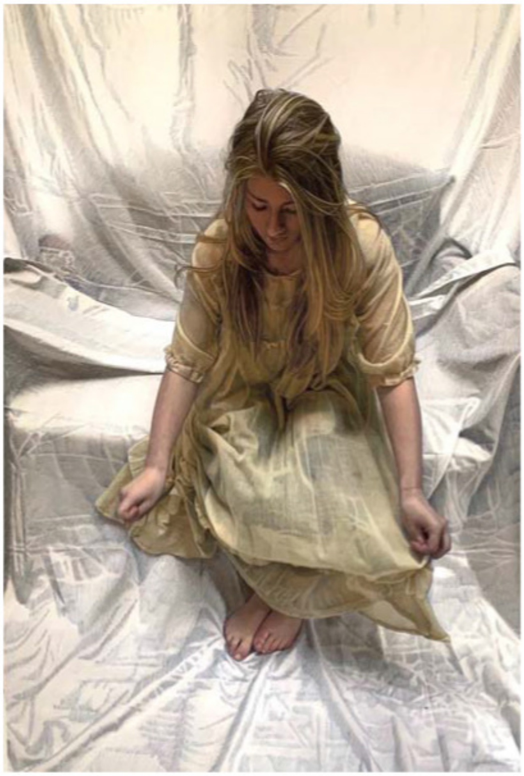
The Scream
(oil on canvas, 39⅓x31½)



MARGARET MINARDI
Fort Salonga, New York
margaretminardiartist.com
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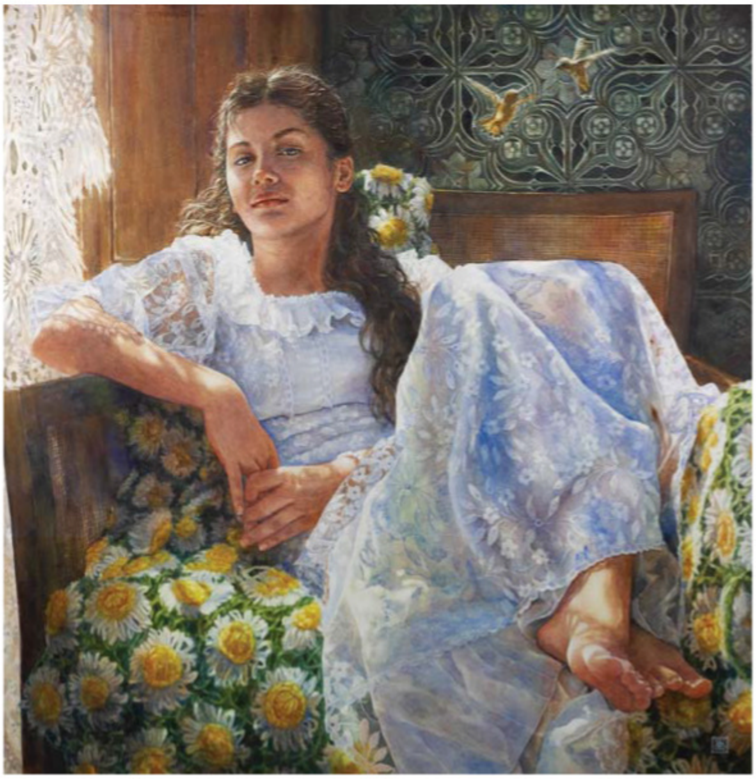
Shannon
(colored pencil on paper, 30x22)



DANIELA WERNECK
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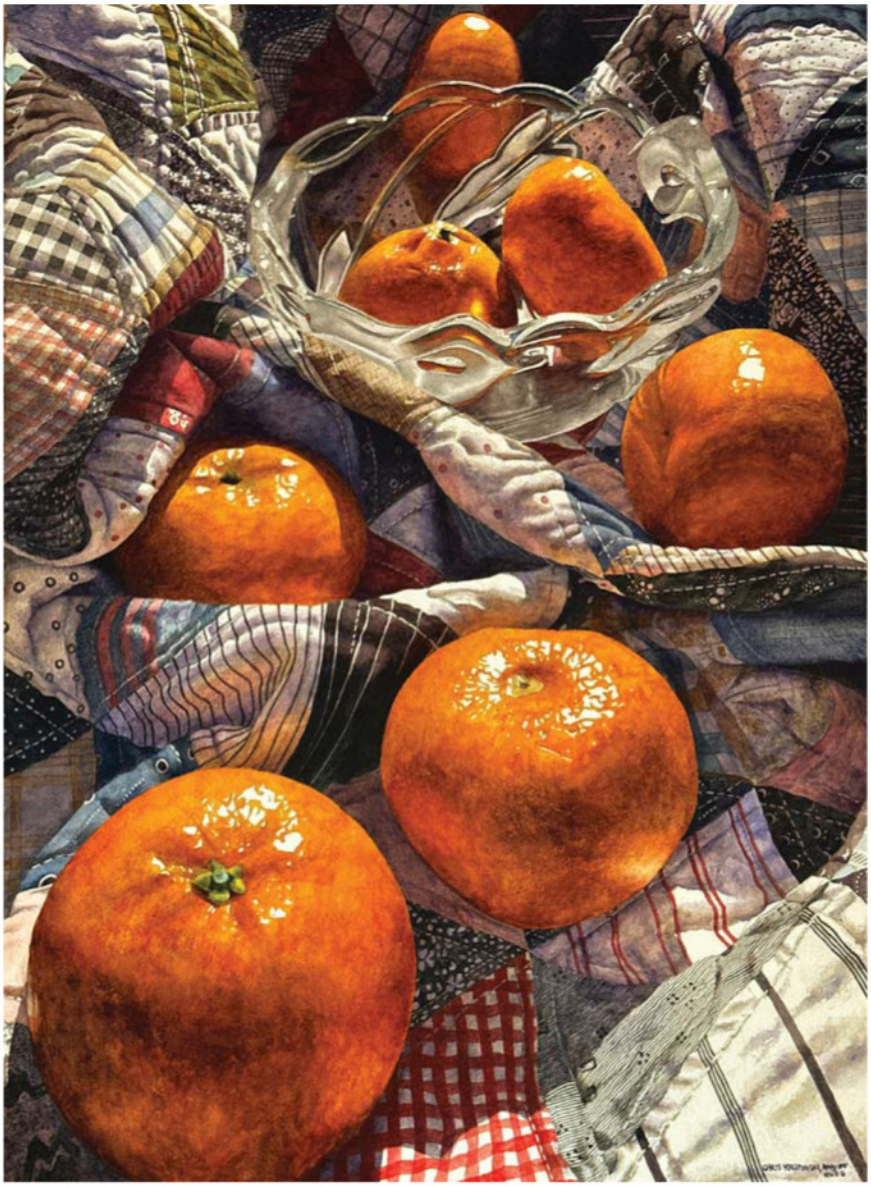
danielawerneck.com
@daniela.werneck

Sunny Morning
(watercolor on clay panel, 24x24)



"The positioning of the protagonist fruits is a masterful device to pull us into this dazzling technique in watercolor. The textures—glossy oranges, time-worn cotton and molded crystal—are modeled with satisfying mastery, letting viewers know they're in good hands. I love the combination of patterns in the quilt and in the skins of the fruit. This artist wields light and dark, as well as cool and warm, with dramatic ease." **—MELISSA HEFFERLIN, JUROR**

FIRST PLACE

CHRIS KRUPINSKI

Maineville, Ohio

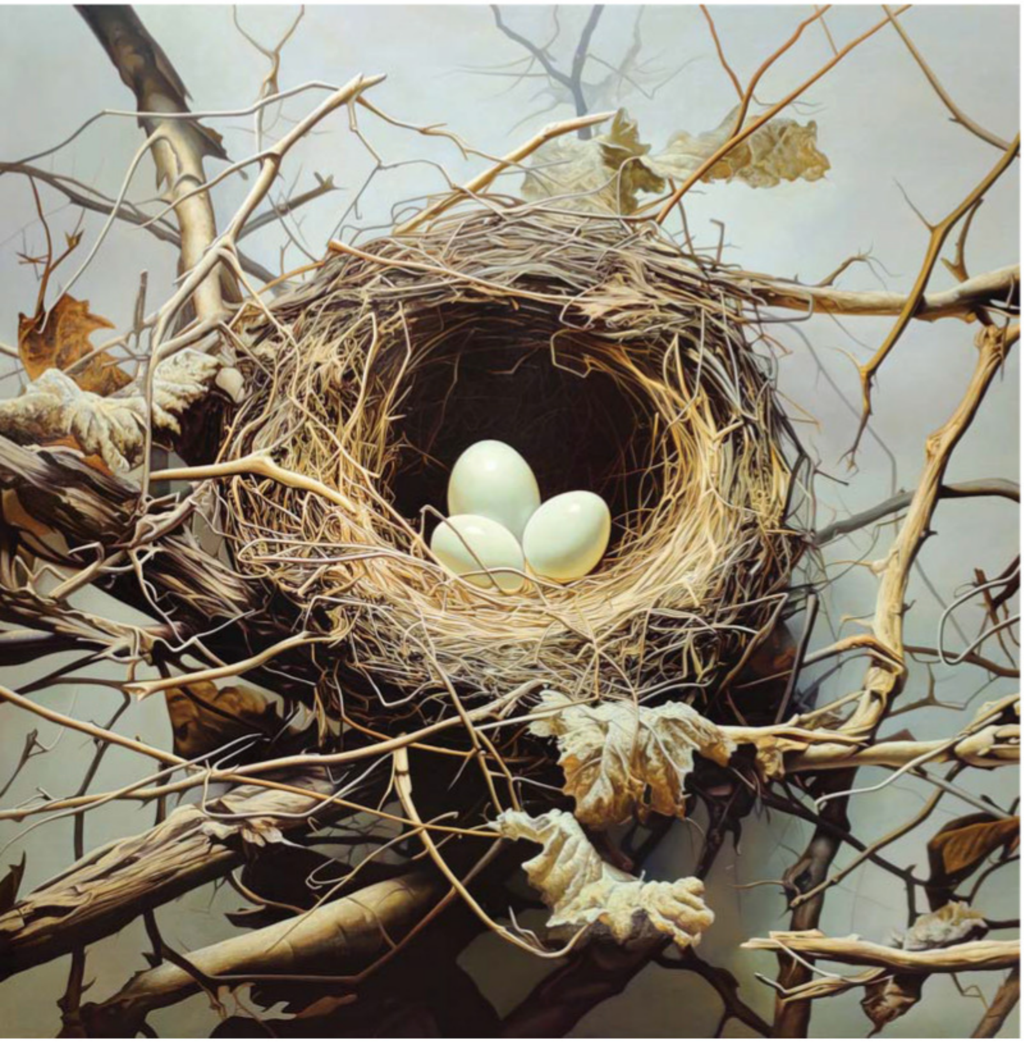
Such Cuties (transparent watercolor on paper, 30x22)

What was your inspiration for *Such Cuties*?
With a background in graphic design, the motivation for my work is primarily composition and design. I always strive to create an interesting composition with shapes, textures and color. I don't have any particular draw to the fruits and elements I use in my still lifes.

What stands out for you about the painting?
I love painting quilts. Sometimes the patterns within the quilts are quite intricate. The quilt in this painting was comprised of more subdued colors that, when paired with the brightness of the "cuties," created a wonderful contrast. The folds of the quilt just seemed to fall into the right places, and, along with the parade of fruit, guide the viewer's eye to the focal point—the glass bowl.

CHRISKRUPINSKIWATERCOLORS

@CHRIS.KRUPINSKI



SECOND PLACE

LIU XIAOWEI

Panjin City, Liaoning Province, China

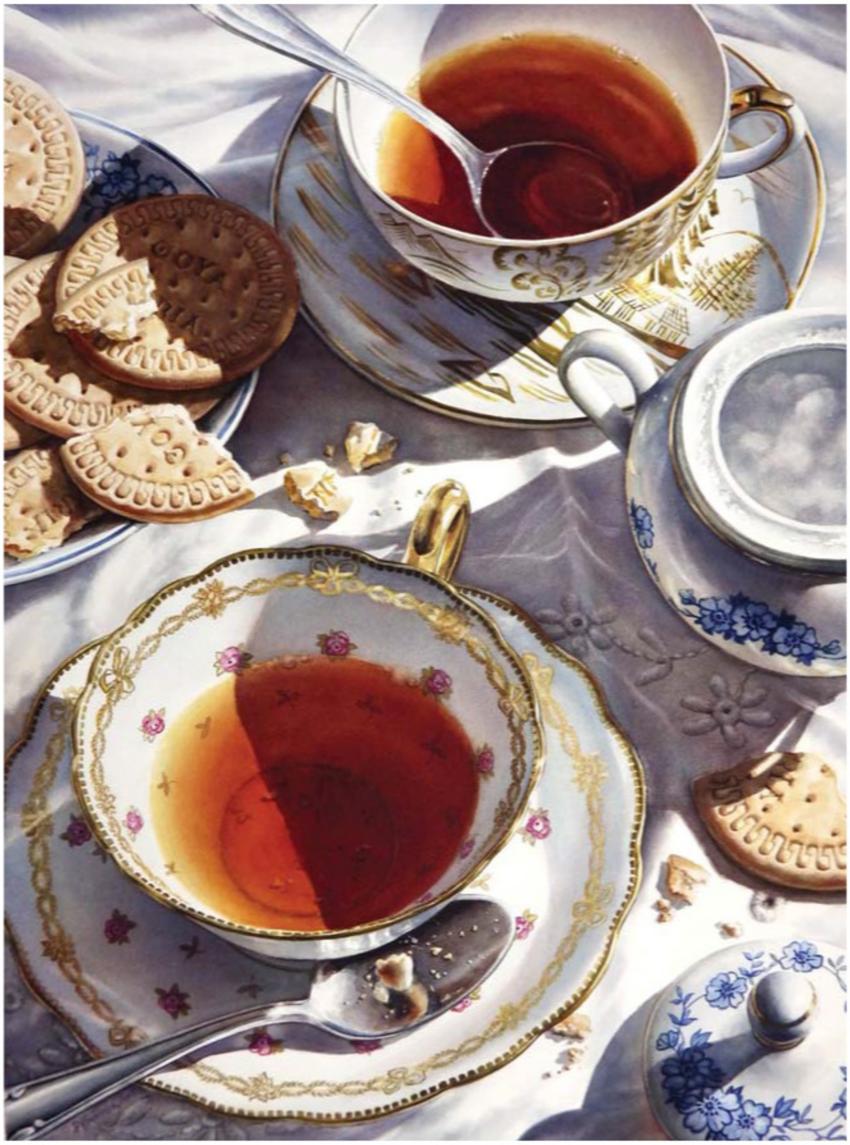
Nest (oil on linen, 28x28)

What was your inspiration for *Nest*? Nature is an eternal source of inspiration for artists. As a symbol of vitality and protection in nature, the bird's nest inspired me to think deeply about themes such as life, home and safety. I got inspiration for the creation by observing the structure, materials and activities relevant to the bird's nest.

What stands out for you about the painting? The nest has a symbolic meaning, representing the human need for stability, security and belonging. I'm pleased with the color and composition. The soft tones and fine details make the painting look harmonious and layered, while the light, shadow and spatial relationships highlight the subject.

"The job of any work of art is to transfer meaning—and to transport us into a state of mind that we wouldn't otherwise encounter. This beautiful still life does so through harmonious color; excellent technique in rendering form, line and texture; and subtle modulation in the temperature of the background. There's also the intriguing puzzle of eggs generally occurring in spring, while this nest is surrounded by dry leaves. Bittersweet! The artist's manipulation of high and low contrast is masterful. The angles of the branches are perfectly balanced to prevent the central location of the nest itself from being a bore. This painting is technically excellent, subtle and inspiring." **—MELISSA HEFFERLIN, JUROR**

Liu Xiaowei



> "*Breakfast With Maria* so clearly represents the angle and behavior of light, that even without the title, I instantly imagined a delightful interlude at about 10 a.m. in a garden-facing room. I admire the brave crops, including the risky spoon handle coming right out of the bottom-left corner. My eyes are led around this sun-soaked composition to enjoy the textures of linen, china, gold, baked goods and amber liquid."
>
> **—MELISSA HEFFERLIN, JUROR**

THIRD PLACE

LANA PRIVITERA

Pine Bush, New York

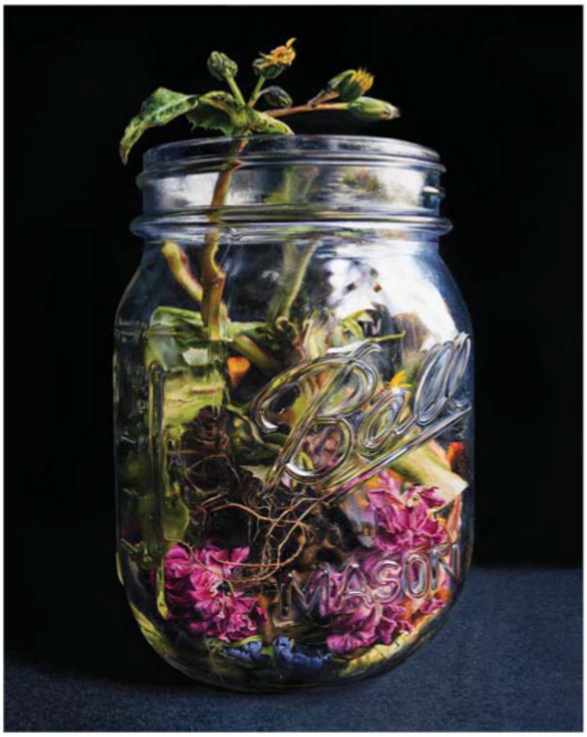
Breakfast With Maria (watercolor on paper, 29x21)

What was your inspiration for *Breakfast With Maria*?
I like creating art that makes viewers travel back in time to memories of happier days. One cold morning, while dipping some Maria cookies into a cup of tea, I realized that I had been eating Marias for 60 years and considered that many millions of people also had been eating them since childhood. As soon as I made this painting public, I received hundreds of comments from all over the world, from people sharing their own cherished memories of these beloved cookies.

What stands out for you about the painting?
I wanted this work to have an interesting, well-balanced composition, so I took my time planning and painting it. As I took hundreds of photos under different light angles, I revised all the rules of composition in my head, looking for variety and dominance of size, shape, line, value and color. I also arranged the objects in such a way that they led the eye of the viewer to every area and detail in the painting. I was aiming to portray that casual disarray that occurs when two people sharing a small table are deep in conversation.

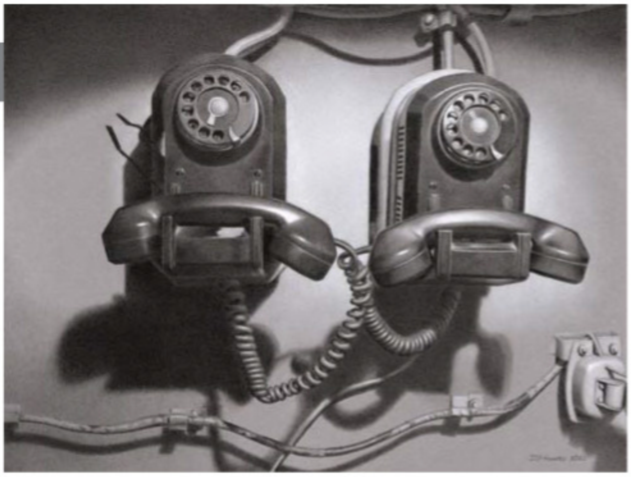
LANAPRIVITERA.COM

HONORABLE MENTIONS



STEPHEN JOHNSTON
Lisburn, Northern Ireland
stephen-johnston.co.uk
@observantpainter

Flowers in Jar No. 8
(oil on canvas, 39⅓x31½)



DENISE J. HOWARD
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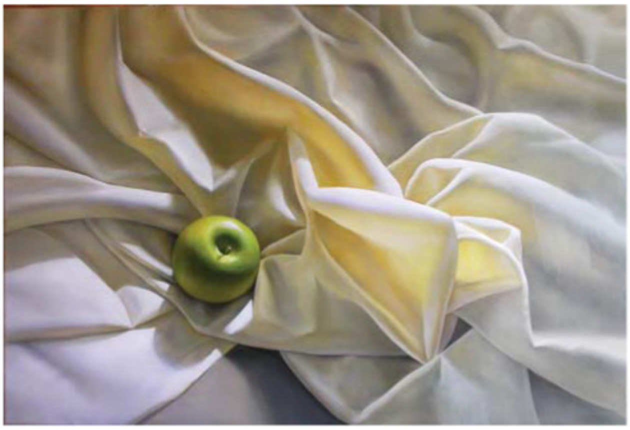
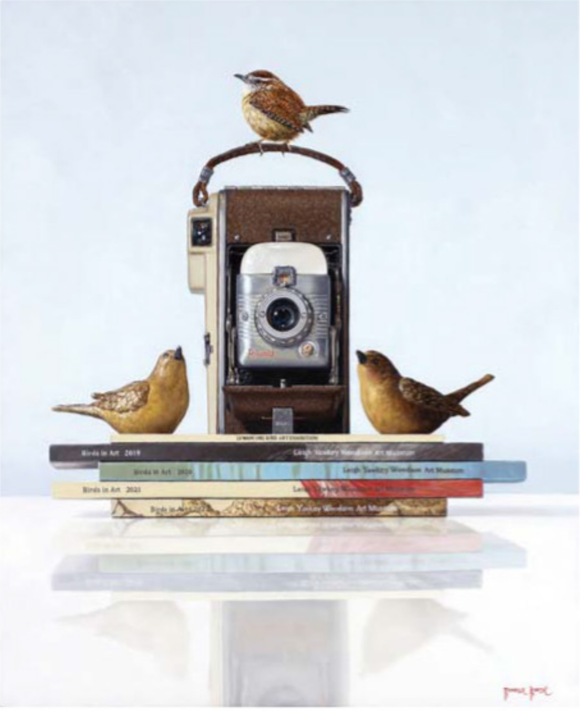
Waiting
(colored pencil on paper, 15x20)



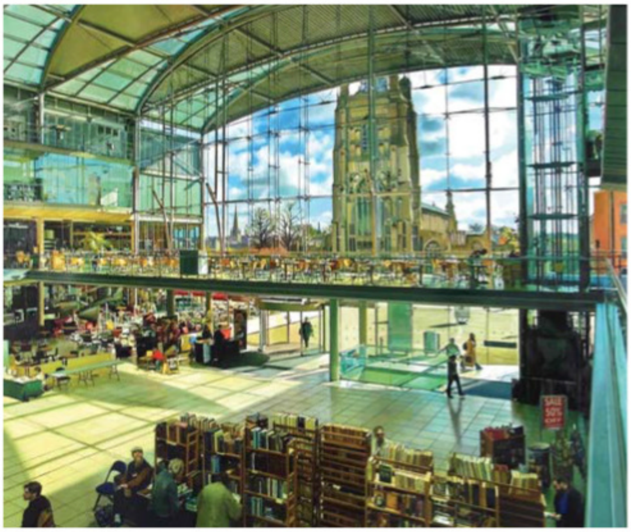
ELAINE KURIE
Sparta, New Jersey
elainekurie.studio
@elainekurieart

Apple on Cloth
(oil on linen, 24x36)



REBECCA KORTH
Marshfield, Wisconsin
rebeccakorth.com
@korthfineart

Wren in Art
(oil on panel, 20x16)



GAIL WEGODSKY
Sandy Springs, Georgia
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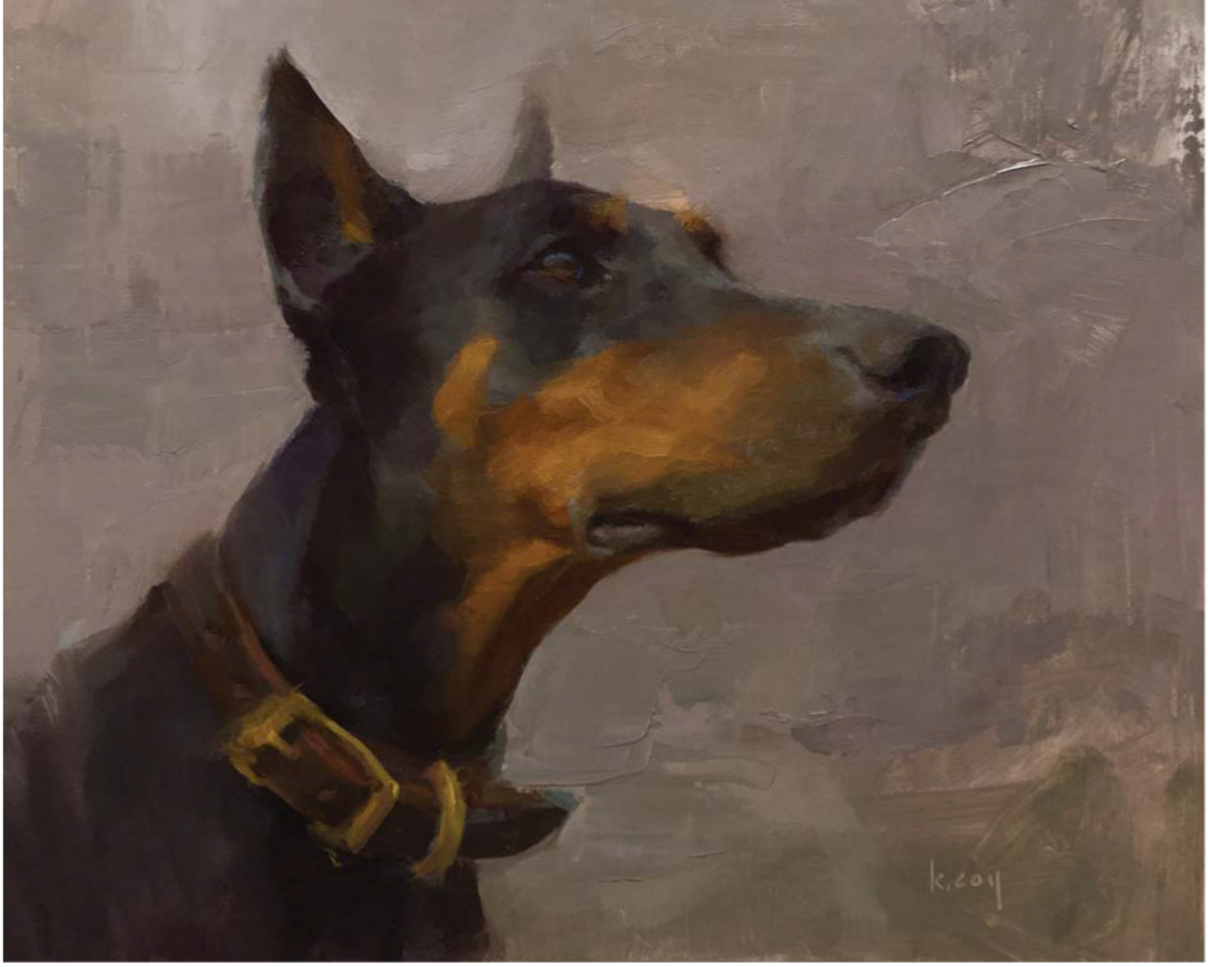
@gailwegodsky

Book Sale at the Forum
(oil on linen, 32x37)



FIRST PLACE

KATHLEEN COY

Squires, Missouri

North Shore's Burning Sage (oil on linen, 8x10)

KATHLEENCOY.COM

@KATHLEEN_COY_ART

What was your inspiration for *North Shore's Burning Sage*?
This painting is of my Doberman, Sage, and the title is her registered name. One thing that fascinates me about dogs, and especially Sage, is their keen awareness of the world around them. When I snapped the reference photo for this painting, we were on our daily hike, and Sage was intently watching a vulture soaring nearby. She's my first Doberman, and I had only had her for a couple of weeks and was enthralled by her watchfulness. She's the first dog I've ever had that scans the skies.

What stands out for you about the painting?
I love the way the warm colors of her facial markings and the brass hardware of her collar play against the cools in her black fur and the background. She's painted with soft and hard edges, which help to move the eye around the work. I especially like the hard edge along her ear, which leads the viewer's eye right to her gaze. I also like the subdued colors in this painting; they're a nice contrast to the intensity of her pose.

"This little painting is deceptively simple. It reminds me of the quote about anyone being able to make something complicated but it takes a genius to make something simple. The composition is uncomplicated, and the colors are muted; however, these elements are used in such a way that the painting comes off as vibrant and full of depth. The artist's technique is unfussy and loose, but does not come off as chaotic, as the edges seem to have been selectively done." **—DANA HAWK, JUROR**

SECOND PLACE

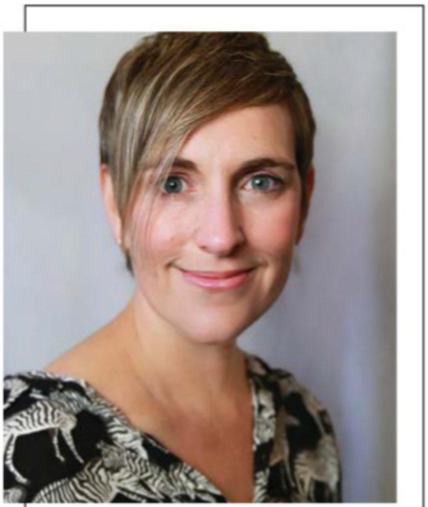
HOLLY KAVONIC

South Lake Tahoe, California

Watching, Waiting (oil on linen canvas, 20x28)

What was your inspiration for *Watching, Waiting*?
Growing up in South Africa, I was always in love with wildlife. My childhood was full of visits to game reserves. Another huge inspiration came when I was about 15 and acquired one of Robert Bateman's books showcasing his work. I fell in love with his art, especially his moody, misty pieces. *Watching, Waiting* was truly inspired by his work. I've always wanted to create paintings that deeply move the viewer—paintings that draw a person in and connect them to the beauty in our world.

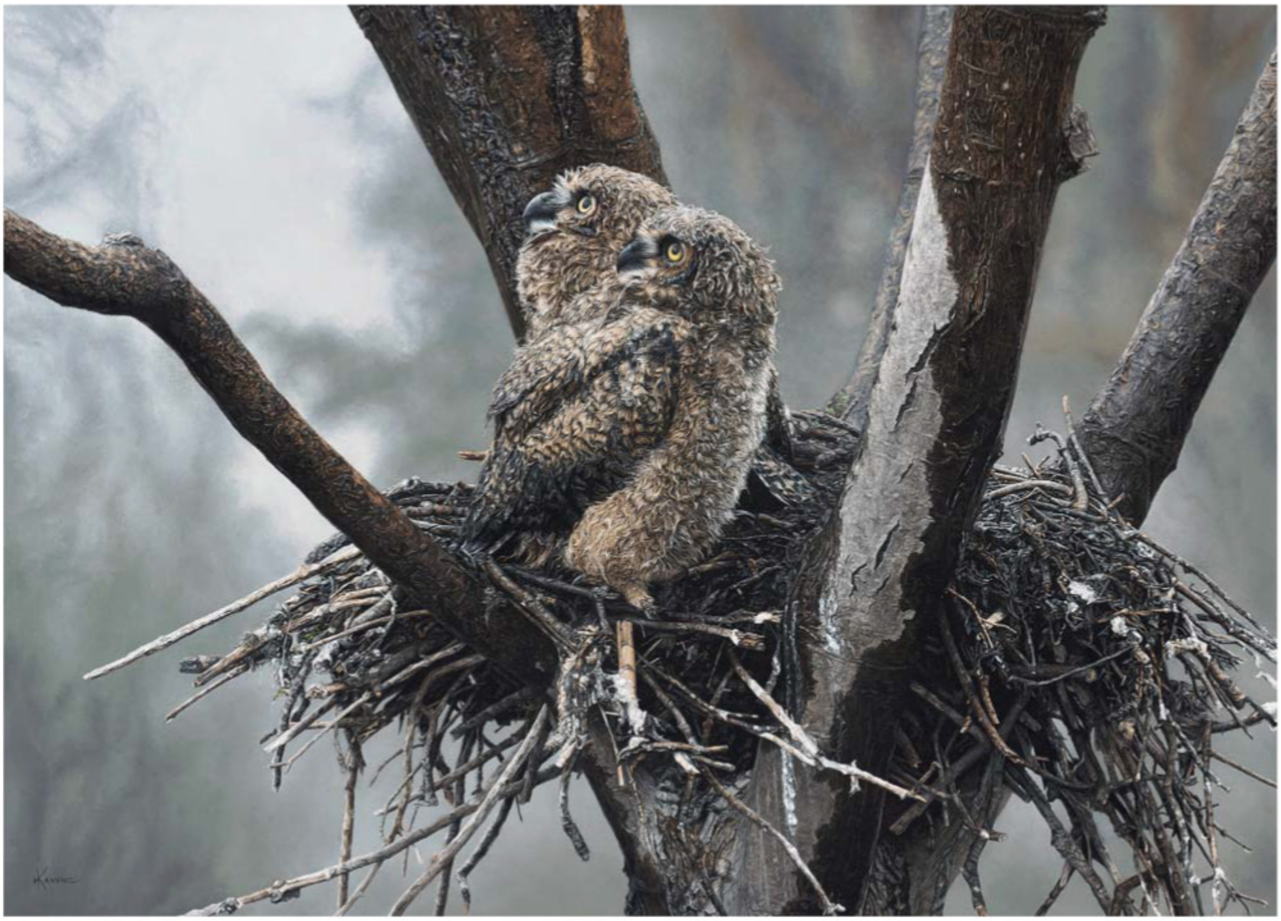
What stands out for you about the painting?
I worked hard to achieve that wild, yet calm feeling of peace after a storm. I wanted to create a moody, mist-filled painting—one in which the viewer can almost smell the world around them after the mist has started to lift.

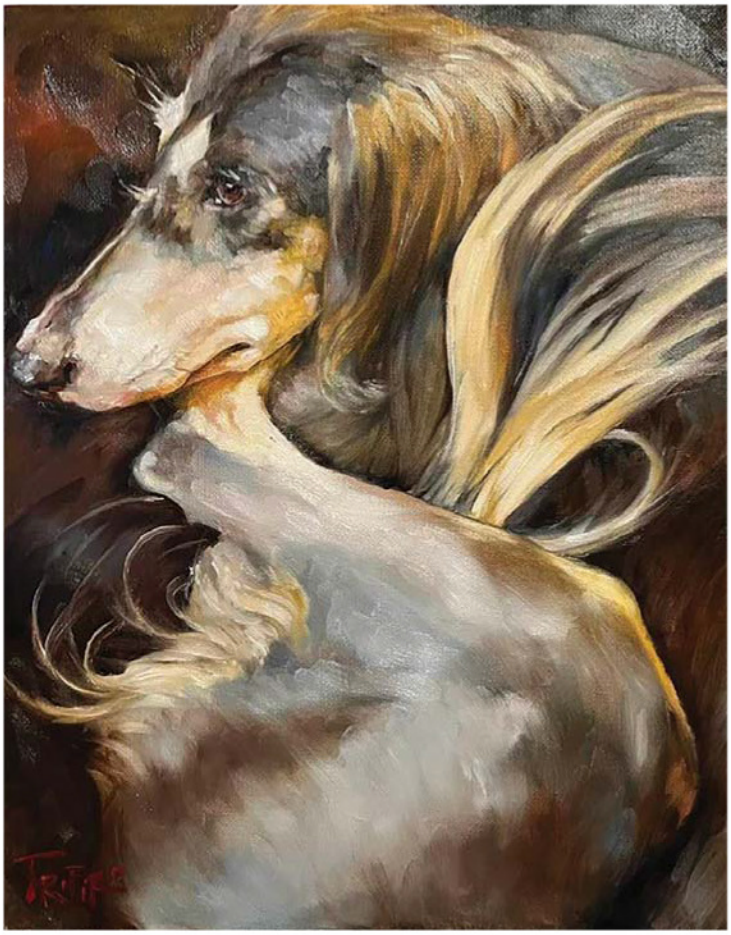


HOLLYKAVONIC.COM

@HOLLY_KAVONIC_ART

"The detail in this painting is incredible and could have been busy and overwhelming; however, the artist used a limited palette that not only tied all the aspects together and unified them, but a warmer tone was used, preventing the work from feeling cold. The composition also gives the work a balanced feel, and the outspread branches and owls' gaze give an expanding expression." —**DANA HAWK, JUROR**





"I love how the eye moves around the 'vertical sine wave' composition of this painting. The unfussy, loose and clearly experienced handling of the paint just adds to the fluidity and movement that captures our attention. The view shift from the dog positioned horizontally to being viewed in the vertical plane also lends to the intrigue, while feeling elegant due to the artist's choice of palette and wonderful contrast of lights and darks."

—**DANA HAWK, JUROR**

THIRD PLACE

MICHELE TRIFIRO

Ashburnham, Massachusetts

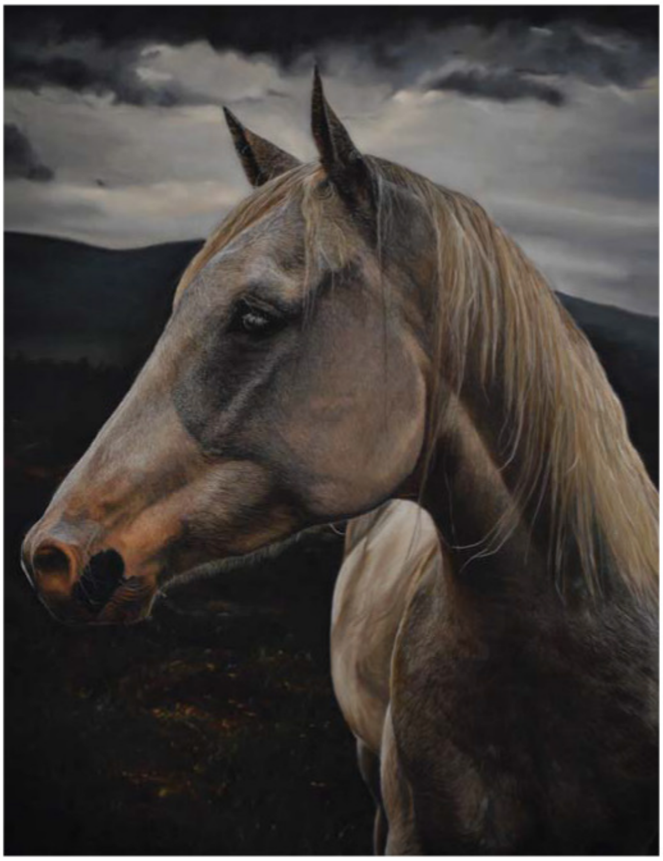
Saluki (oil on canvas, 14x11)

What was your inspiration for *Saluki*?
I paint anything, but my true inspiration lies with purebred dogs. I've been breeding, training and showing dogs since 1994. It was a passion for many years until my life partner died in 2016—and the desire to compete in dog shows died, too. Lonely and grieving on Christmas Day that year, I scrolled social media and saw a Facebook post from a woman sharing the loss of her beautiful Afghan Hound named Harry Potter. I didn't know the woman or the dog, but I was compelled to paint Harry and send the painting to its owner, in Serbia. That was the beginning and, since then, I've painted and sold my canine paintings all over the world. What started as a coping mechanism has turned into a passion … maybe even an obsession.

What stands out for you about the painting?
Working predominantly in oil, I strive to capture the uniqueness of each animal—both their devotion and their inner soul.

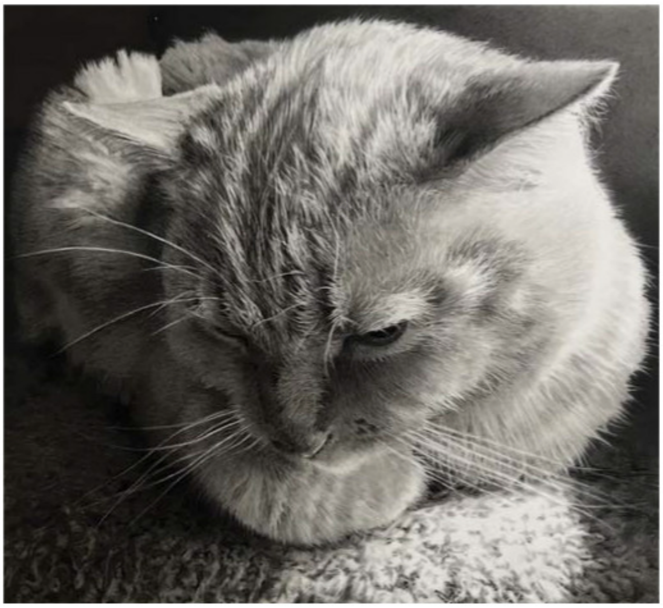
MICHELETRIFIRO.COM

HONORABLE MENTIONS



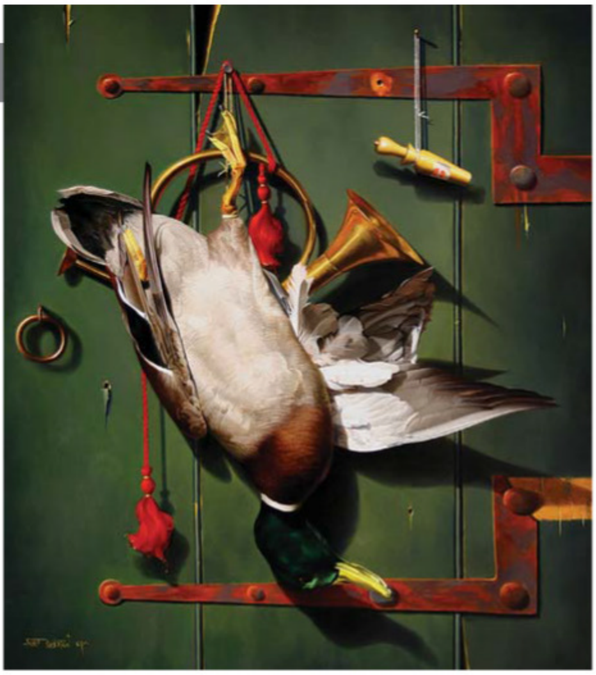
ALLIE LOUISE
Livingston, Montana
allielouiseart.com
@allielouiseart

Cowboy at Dusk
(pastel on paper, 48x36)



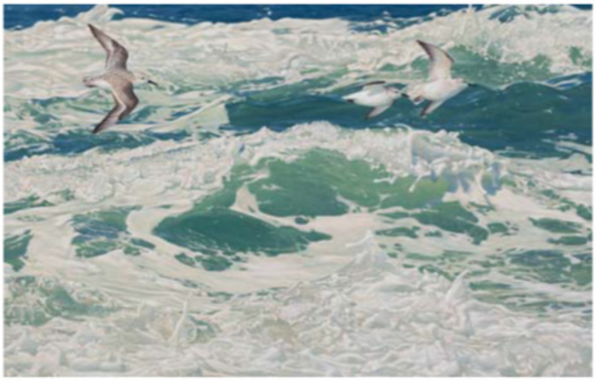
KATHRYN HANSEN
Glendale, California
kathrynhansen.com
@kathrynhansenpencildrawings

Professional Napper
(colored pencil on Grafix drafting film matte, 8x8¾)



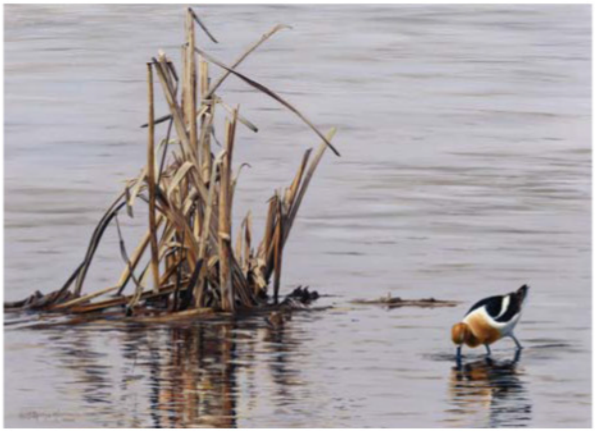
SCOTT B. ROYSTON
Nottingham, Maryland
scottroyston.com
@scottbroyston

He Got Game
(oil on linen, 26x22)



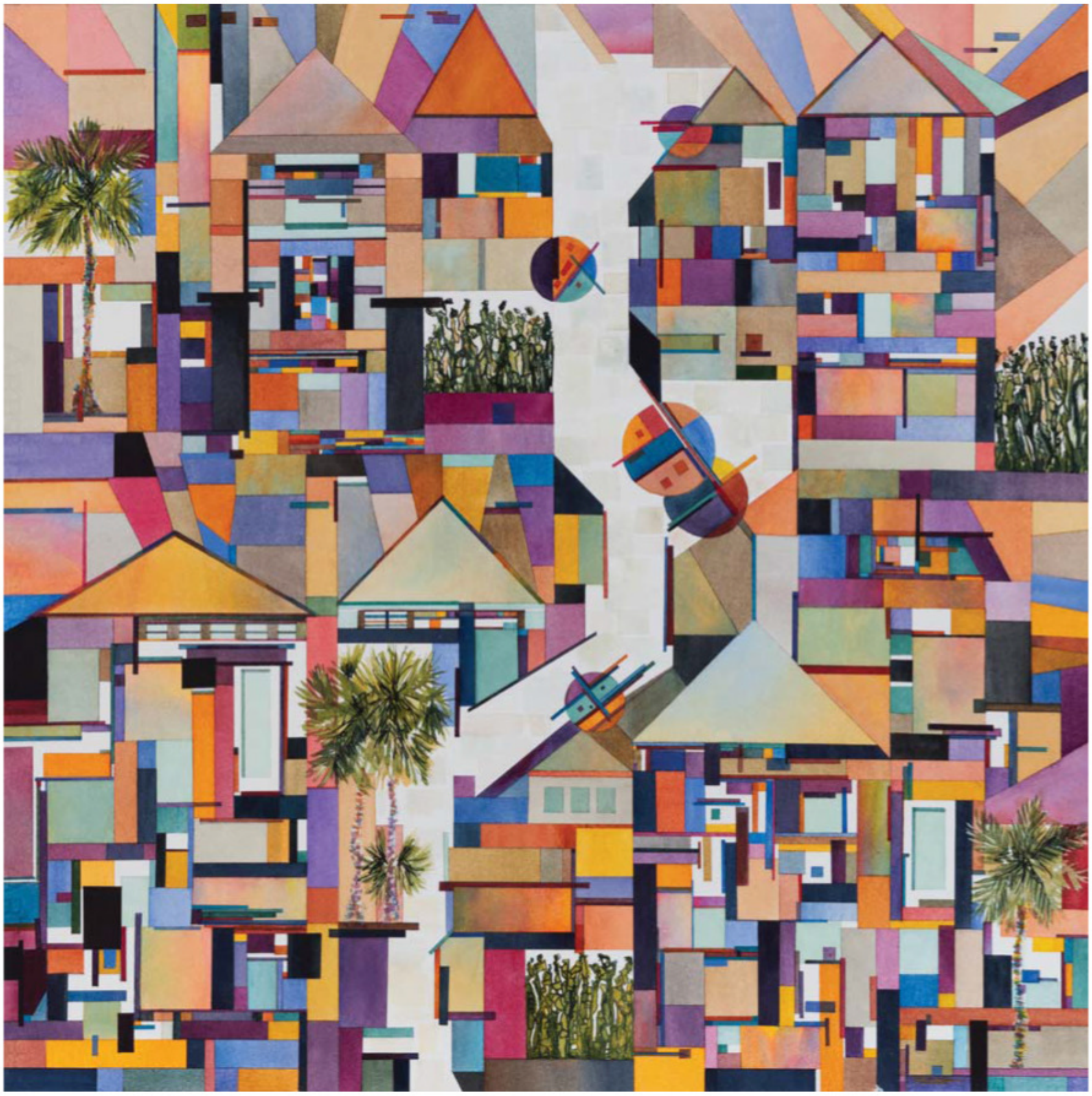
SHAWN GOULD
Eureka, California
shawngould.com

Sanderling Slalom
(acrylic on Masonite, 20x30)



CINDY SORLEY-KEICHINGER
Kitscoty, Alberta, Canada
goldenkstudio.com
@Cindy_Sorley_Keichinger

At the Temple
(acrylic on panel, 18x24)



FIRST PLACE

LISA ARNOLD FRANKLIN

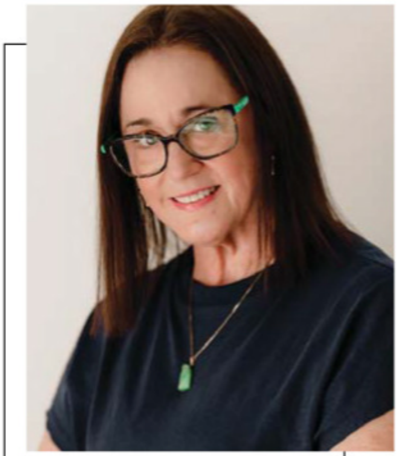
Tequesta, Florida

Residentials (watercolor on paper, 20x20)

What was your inspiration for *Residentials*?
I draw inspiration from my architectural and interior design backgrounds. I've been working on a series I call "Architectural Mosaics," and this watercolor is one of the works in that series.

What stands out for you about the painting?
I enjoy the color chords, repetition and organic lines added to the geometric shapes, as they all create visual interest.

"Variety is the spice of this lively neighborhood. Contrast in alternating shapes, colors, lines and values creates a pleasing rhythmic pattern. Architectural geometry is dominant throughout and is accented nicely by occasional vegetation. Subtle gradients of slightly muted colors make the overall pattern even more spectacular." —**STAN KURTH, JUROR**



LISAARNOLDFRANKLIN.COM

@LISAARNOLDFRANKLINART

SECOND PLACE

TAMMY KELLER

Nokomis, Florida

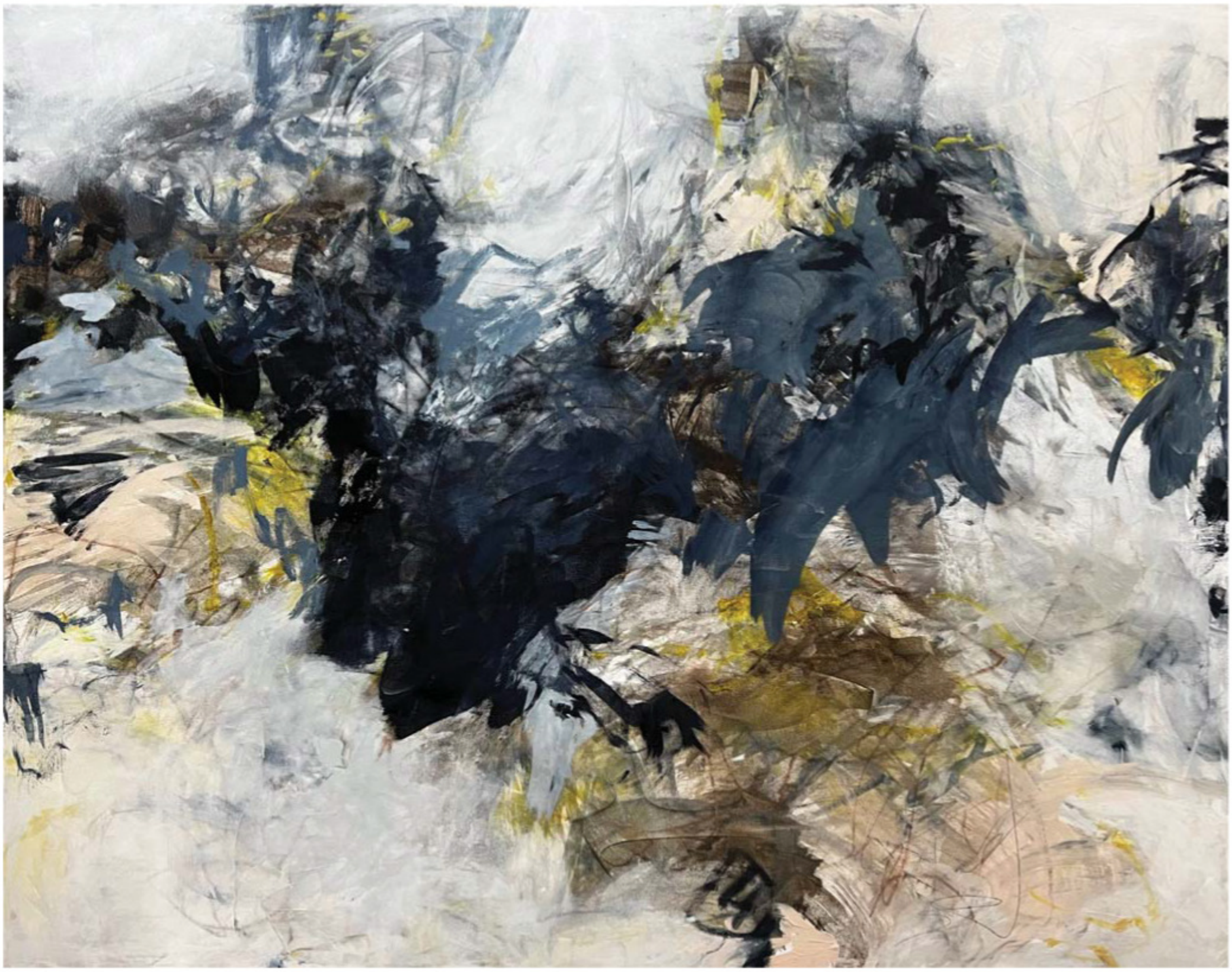
Color of Strength (acrylic, graphite and colored pencil on canvas, 48x60)

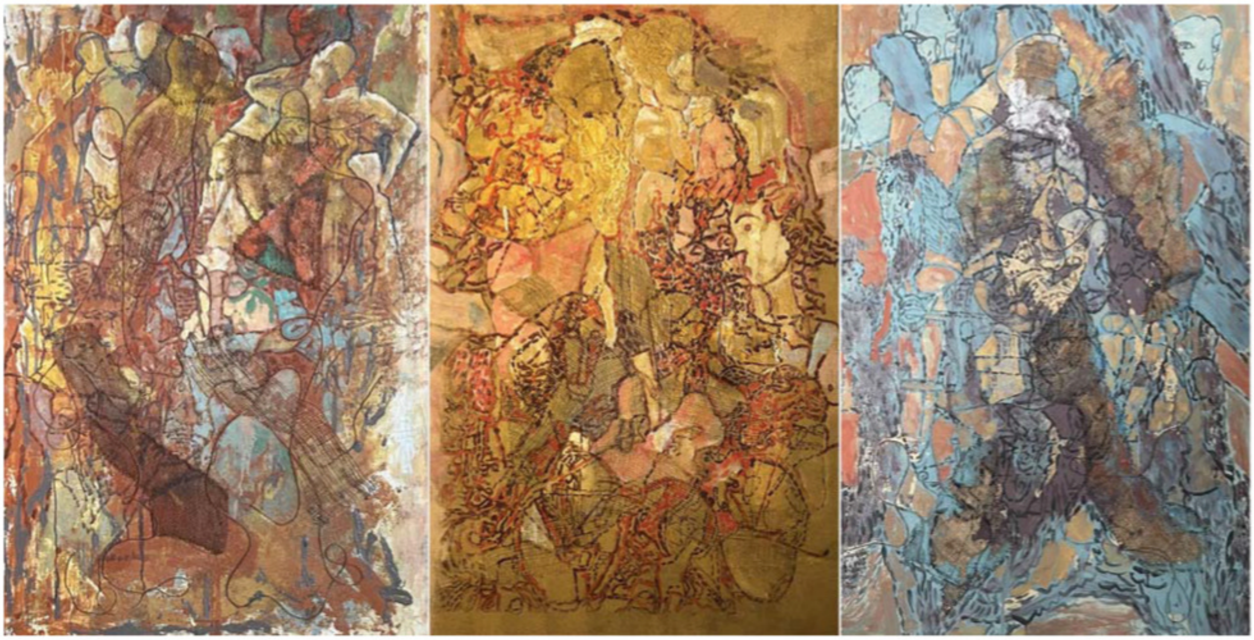
What was your inspiration for *Color of Strength*?
I was exploring the strength within myself through bold gestures, brave mark-making and a high-contrast color palette. This piece is from a group of paintings I completed when I was trying to break free of some internal beliefs that were blocking my creative process.

What stands out for you about the painting?
I had been withholding joy in my work because of turmoil I was feeling internally. This piece feels so free and uncontained, and includes quieter spaces that represent the peace I've regained.

🌐 **TAMMYKELLER.COM**

"A strong contrast in value and color draws the viewer in, offering much to see. Jagged-edged shapes, created with clusters of bold, neutral-colored brushstrokes, overlap colorful but less intense marks and strokes, creating a dynamic and frenetic tension." —**STAN KURTH, JUROR**





"Mysterious figures are veiled by a stochastic pattern in this large triptych. Shapes morph into different forms and disappear, only to reappear with the slightest shift of the eyes. Shapes on top of shapes, lines over lines, texture upon texture, and veils upon veils make this enigmatic work a treasure trove of visual delights." **—STAN KURTH, JUROR**

THIRD PLACE

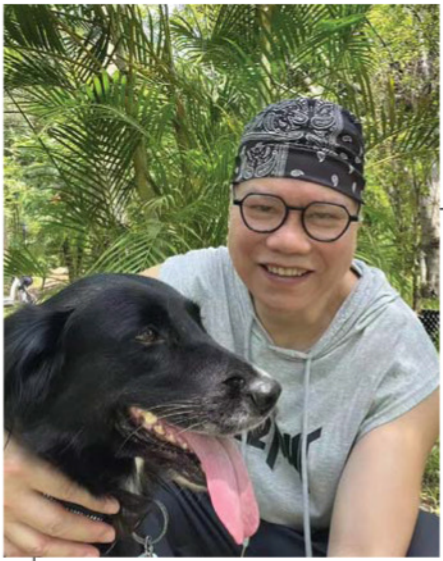
HUANG BIN

Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, China

Artist Notes Series: No.24.02-04
(triptych; mixed media on linen, 60x39 each)

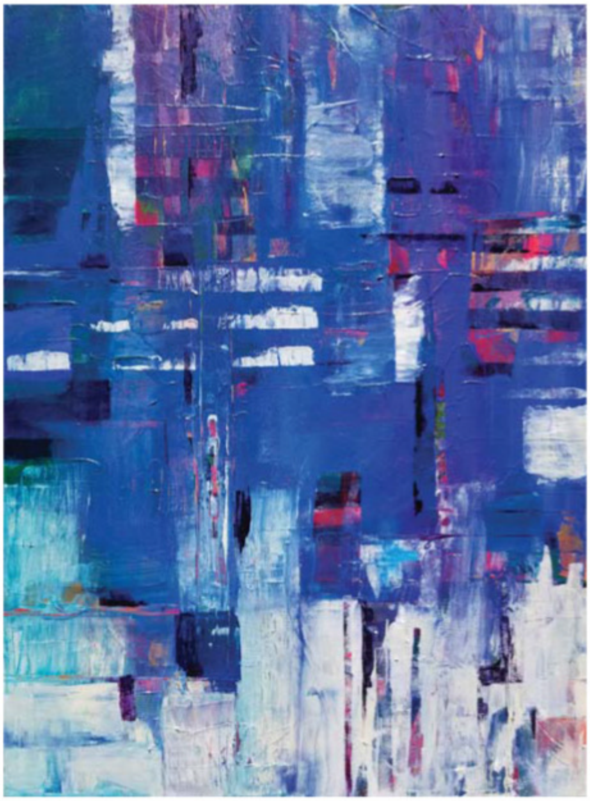
What was your inspiration for *Artist Notes Series: No.24.02-04*?
From 2019 to 2022, I created a series of more than 60 abstract works on water-based composite materials that were about 40 inches long. These works captured my confusion, loneliness and enlightenment during the pandemic. After a successful six-month travel engagement throughout the United States in 2022, I began to change my creative train of thought, painting in an even more abstract way. I also increased the canvas sizes to 60 inches for enhanced visual impact. This triptych was inspired by my experiences and feelings in early 2024. My goal was to express my complicated emotions and feelings in an abstract manner.

What stands out for you about the painting?
I completely abandoned the limitation of fixed representational forms. Instead, I was guided by the free expression of the pencil and the true feelings and instinct of my heart.



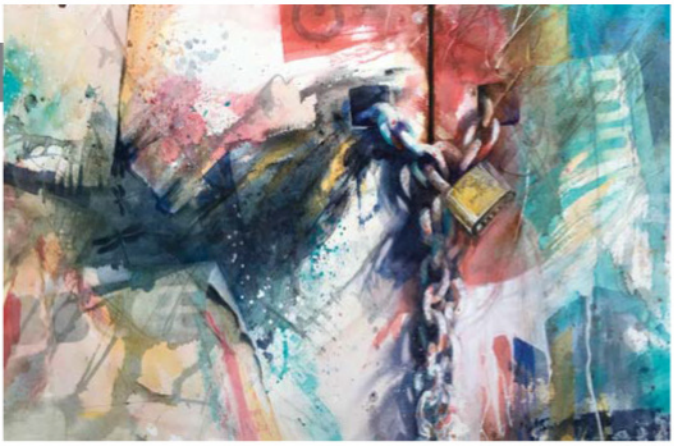
HUANG BIN

HONORABLE MENTIONS



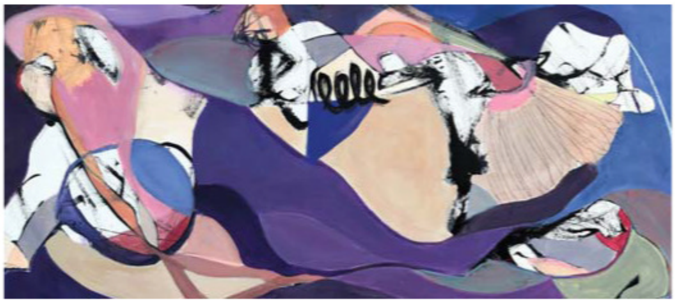
BRENDA STICHTER
Warsaw, Indiana
brendastichter.com
@brendastichter

Duly Noted
(acrylic on canvas, 24x18)



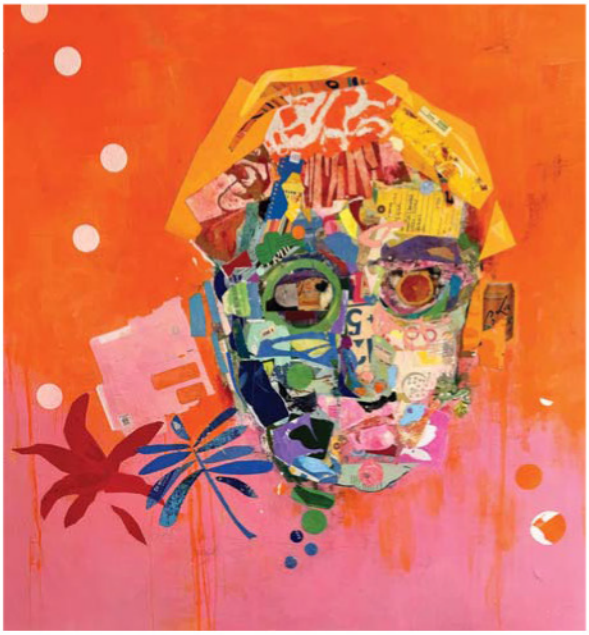
KATHLEEN CONOVER
Marquette, Michigan
kathleenconover.com
@KathleenConoverWatercolor

NYC Skinny Minute
(watermedia on paper, 15x22)



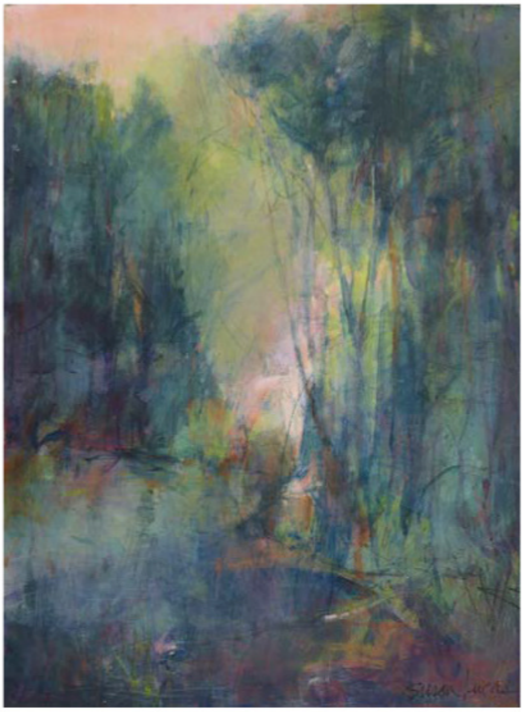
JL SCHWARTZ
Coral Springs, Florida
jlschwartzart.com
@jlschwartzart

Won't You Come for a Swim With Me?
(acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 17x41)



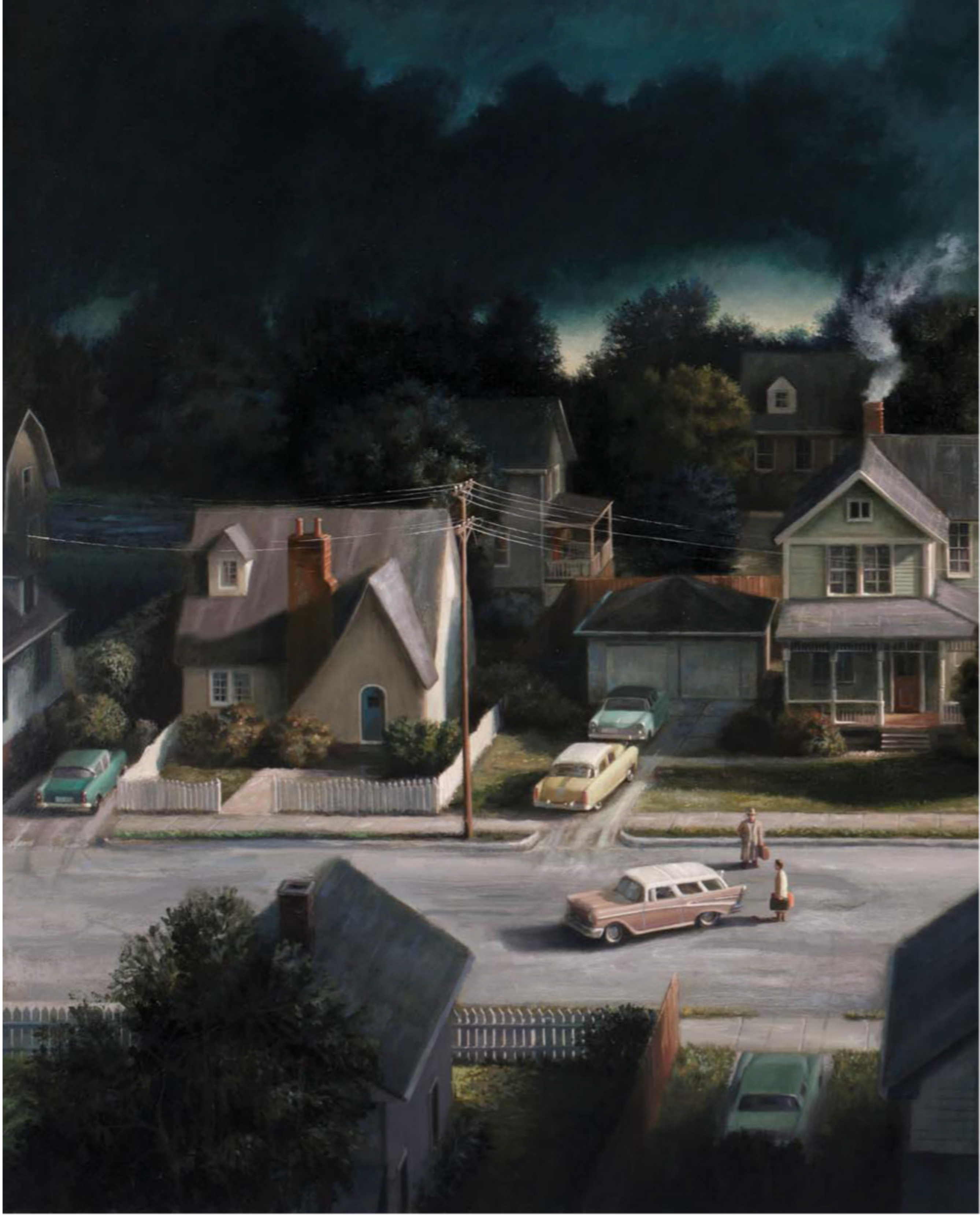
CORY GOULET
Everett, Washington
corygouletart.com
@corygoulet.1

Carrot Top
(acrylic, crayon and collage on wood panel, 48x48)

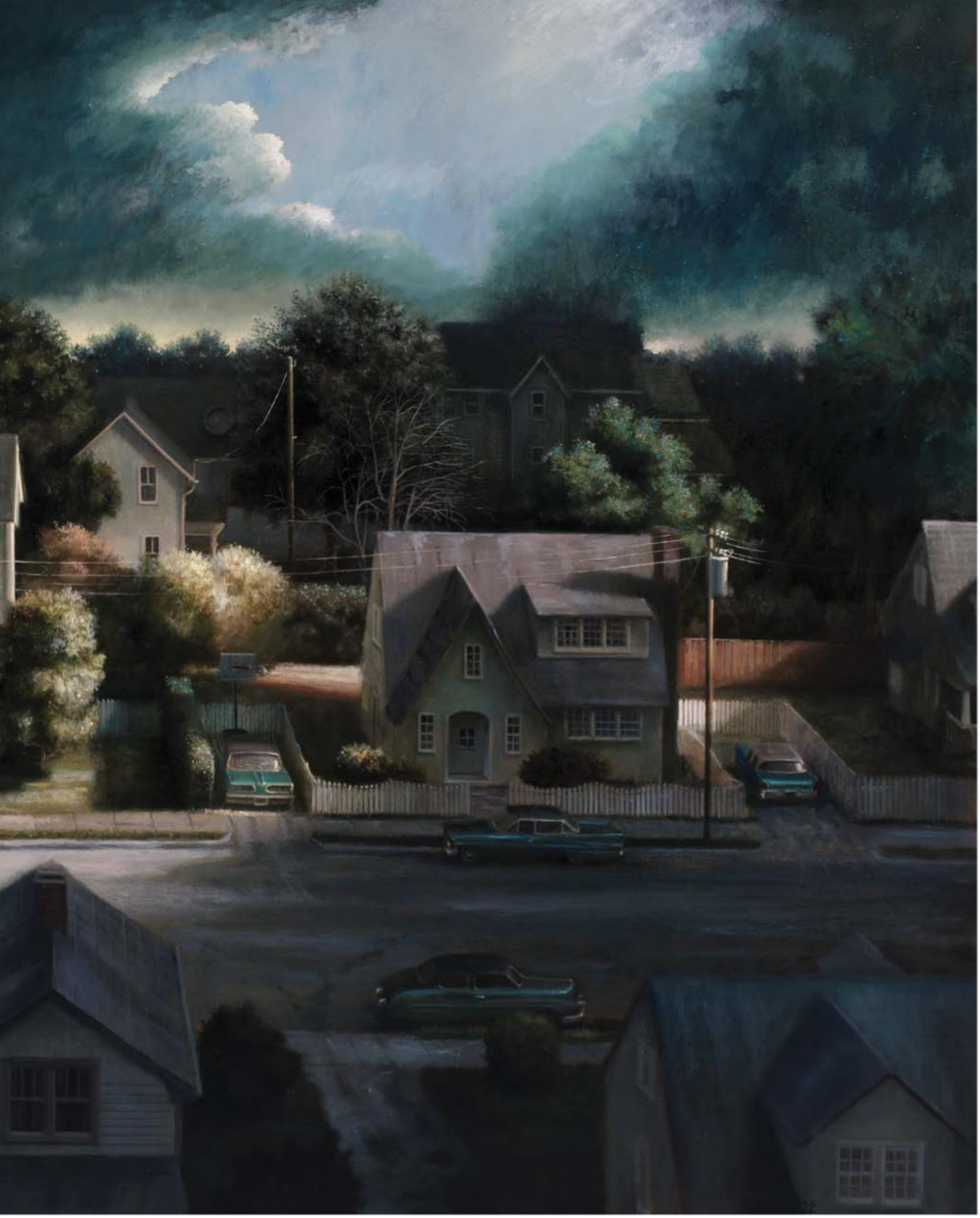


SUSAN LUCAS
Santa Rosa Beach, Florida
susanlucasart.com
@Suziartz

Quiet Dusk
(acrylic and pencil on paper, 30x22)



THE TWILIGHT



ZONE

Take a moonlit stroll into the unsettling suburban worlds of artist **Alberto Ortega**.

By John A. Parks

18+

WHAT IS

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Cheap constant access to piping hot media
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18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages
Brand new content
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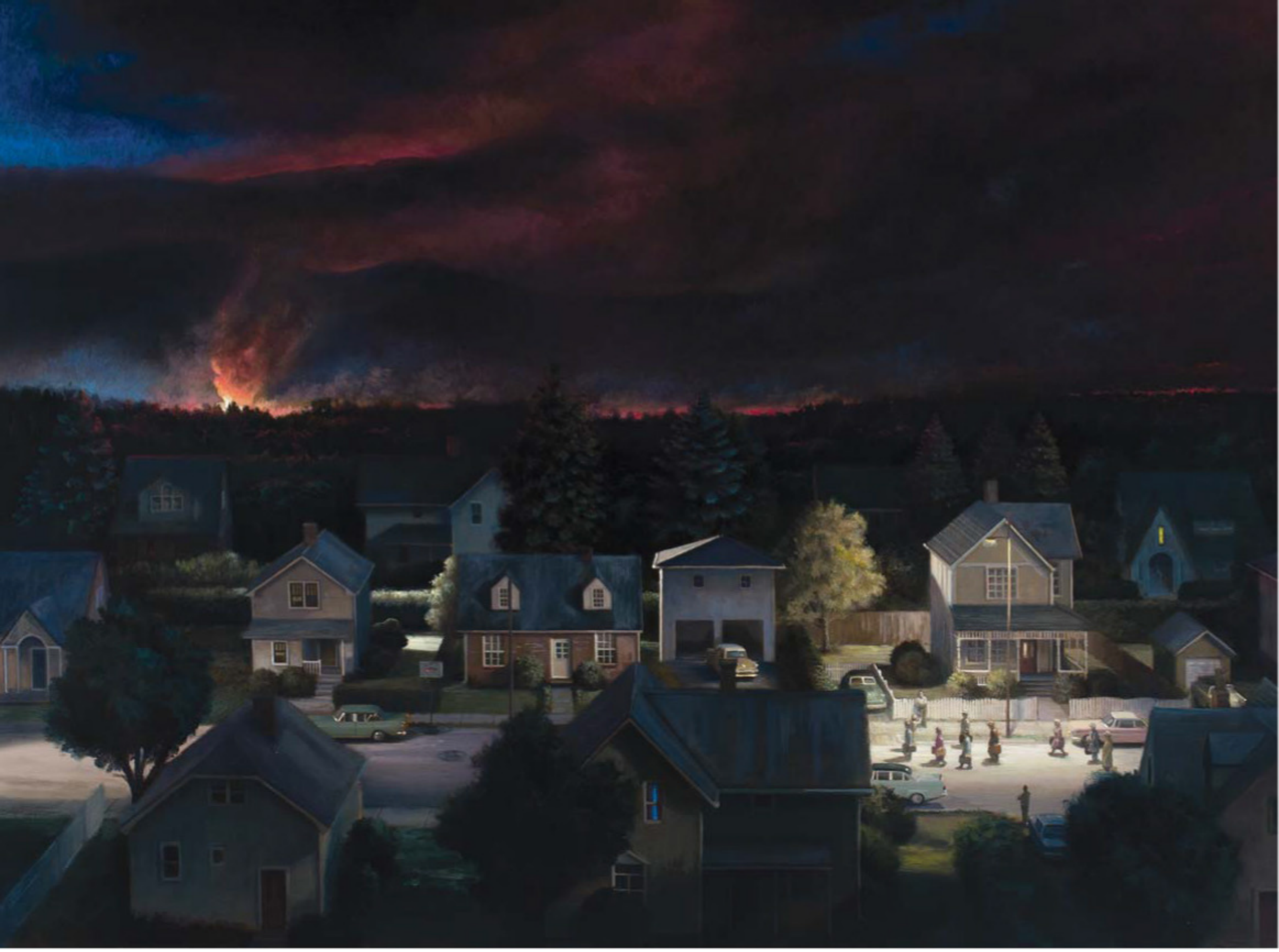


Spanish-born painter Alberto Ortega brings a sharp and alien eye to the sprawling conformity of American suburban life. In a continuing series of panoramic scenes set in what appears to be some idyllic 1950s suburb, he uses the drama of deep twilight and a kind of disquieting simplification to create a sense of unease and foreboding. It's as though an episode of "The Twilight Zone" was painted by Edward Hopper. "Painting the suburbs allows me to explore themes of conformity, loneliness and the hidden dramas of everyday life," Ortega says. "The 1950s setting—often considered the golden era of the suburbs—provides a nostalgic, yet eerie, backdrop that amplifies these themes."

A MODEL NEIGHBORHOOD

The sense of alienation in the scenes—the feeling of something familiar suddenly becoming strange—is powered, in part, by Ortega's decision to base his paintings on models. Working on a 1/87 scale, he builds replicas of '50s suburban architecture and street accoutrements, which he then assembles into elaborate tableaux (page 54). "It's the same scale used in railroad miniatures," explains the artist. "It's the most commonly used scale, which makes it easy to find architectural elements, figures, cars and other materials."

Ortega purchases some of the props and builds much of the rest from styrene. He'll occasionally buy

PREVIOUS
The Clutch
(oil on panel, 30x48)

ABOVE
No Surprises
(oil on panel, 30x48)

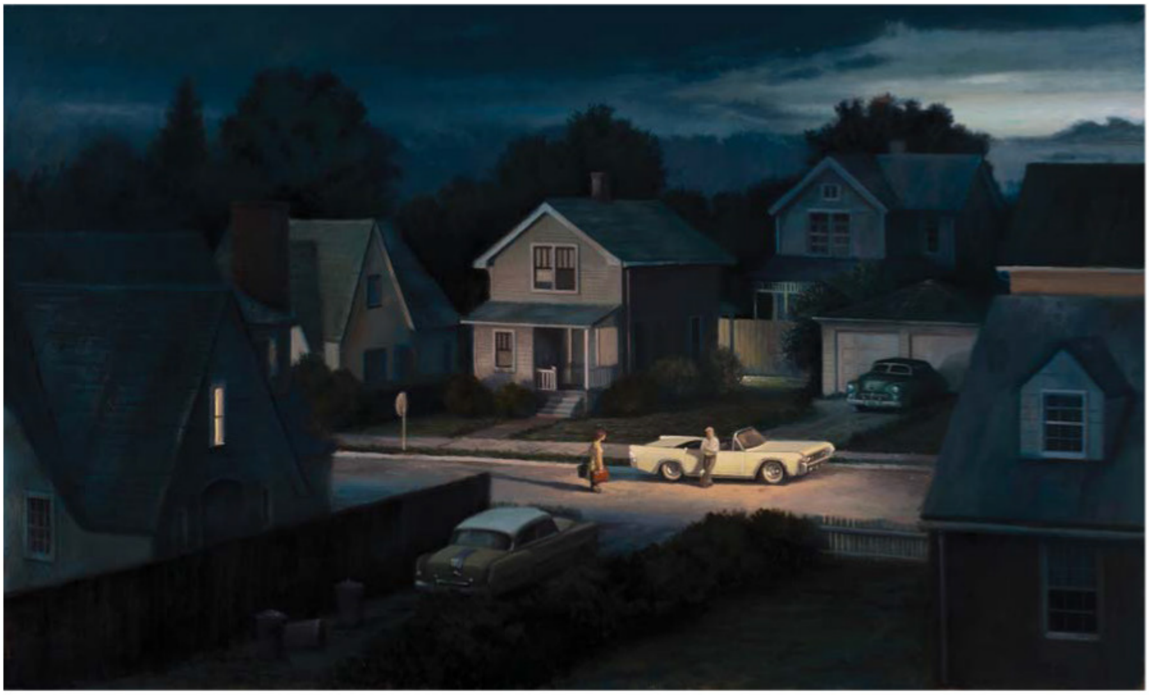
OPPOSITE
An Inquiry
(oil on canvas mounted on panel, 18x30)

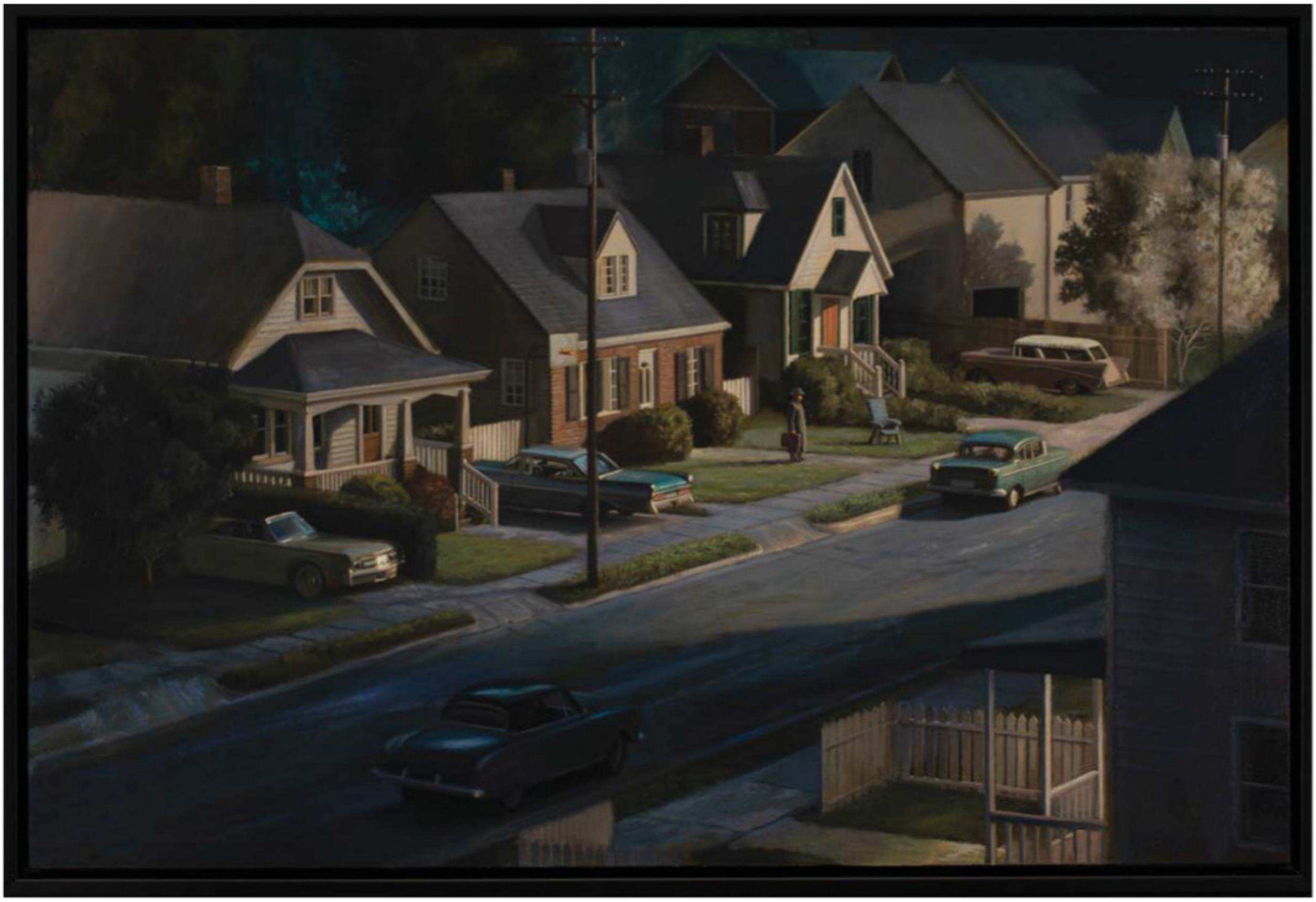
a kit and modify it. "The rest of the scene is made with common materials such as cardboard, insulation foam, plaster of Paris and terrain materials for railroad scenes," he says. "I create trees, roads and other elements from scratch, designing everything to be modular so it can be reused and rearranged in other scenes."

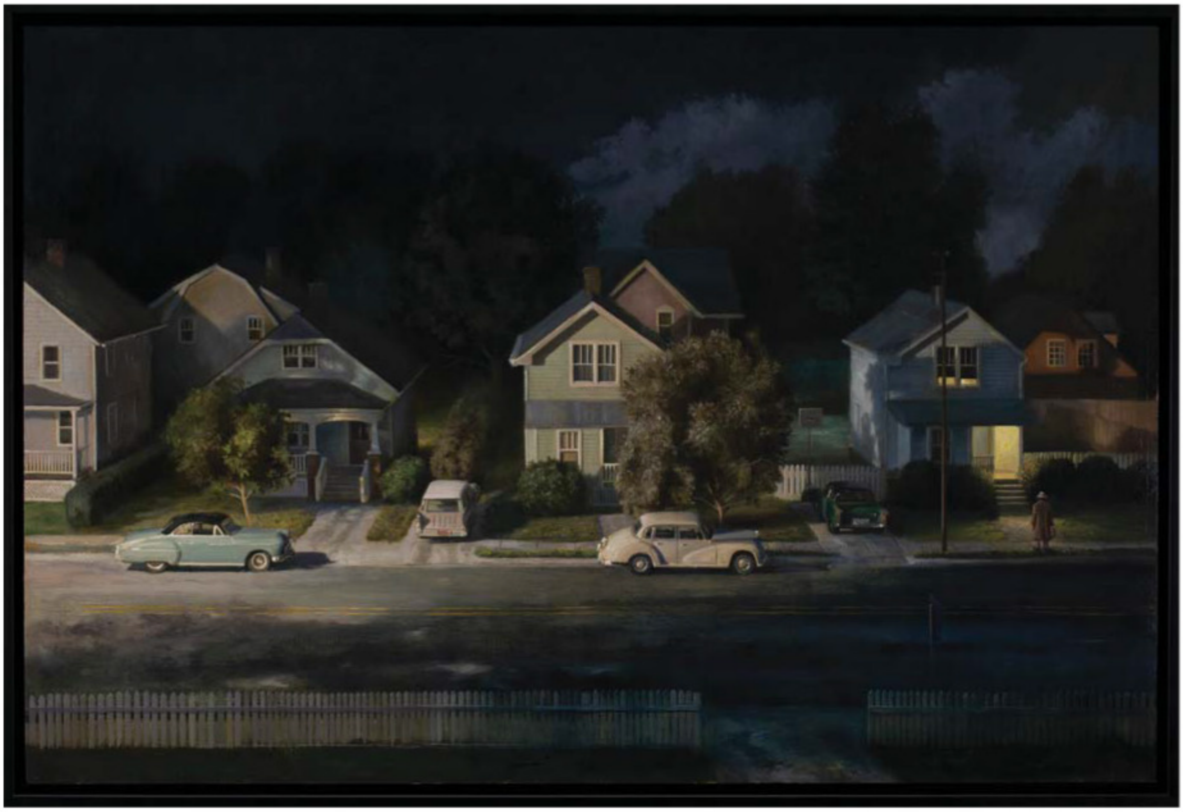
While building an entire neighborhood in miniature, Ortega has to invent or discover a drama on which to base his future painting. "Creating miniature models or mockups has long been a standard procedure for painters to visualize forms and light," he says. "In my case, I take this a bit further and use them to spark ideas, compositions and narratives, much like any artist would use a sketch pad."

The ideas that emerge come to the artist in a variety of ways. "Sometimes I have a specific narrative or theme in mind that I want to explore using miniature models," he says. "Other times, my inspiration comes from capturing a particular tone or mood, focusing more on aesthetics." He often draws inspiration from everyday observations—small details noticed during walks or while driving through his neighborhood. It could be items people leave outside, the transient nature of home ownership or the subtle behaviors people exhibit outside their cars. "These moments spark ideas that find their way into my paintings," Ortega says.

> **"TWILIGHT HAS A UNIQUE, ALMOST MAGICAL QUALITY THAT TRANSFORMS ORDINARY SUBURBAN SETTINGS INTO SOMETHING MORE MYSTERIOUS AND EVOCATIVE."** —ALBERTO ORTEGA







ABOVE
The Looking Glass (oil on panel, 24x36)

LEFT
The Hartleys (oil on panel, 24x36)

OPPOSITE
Reflection (oil on panel, 24x36)

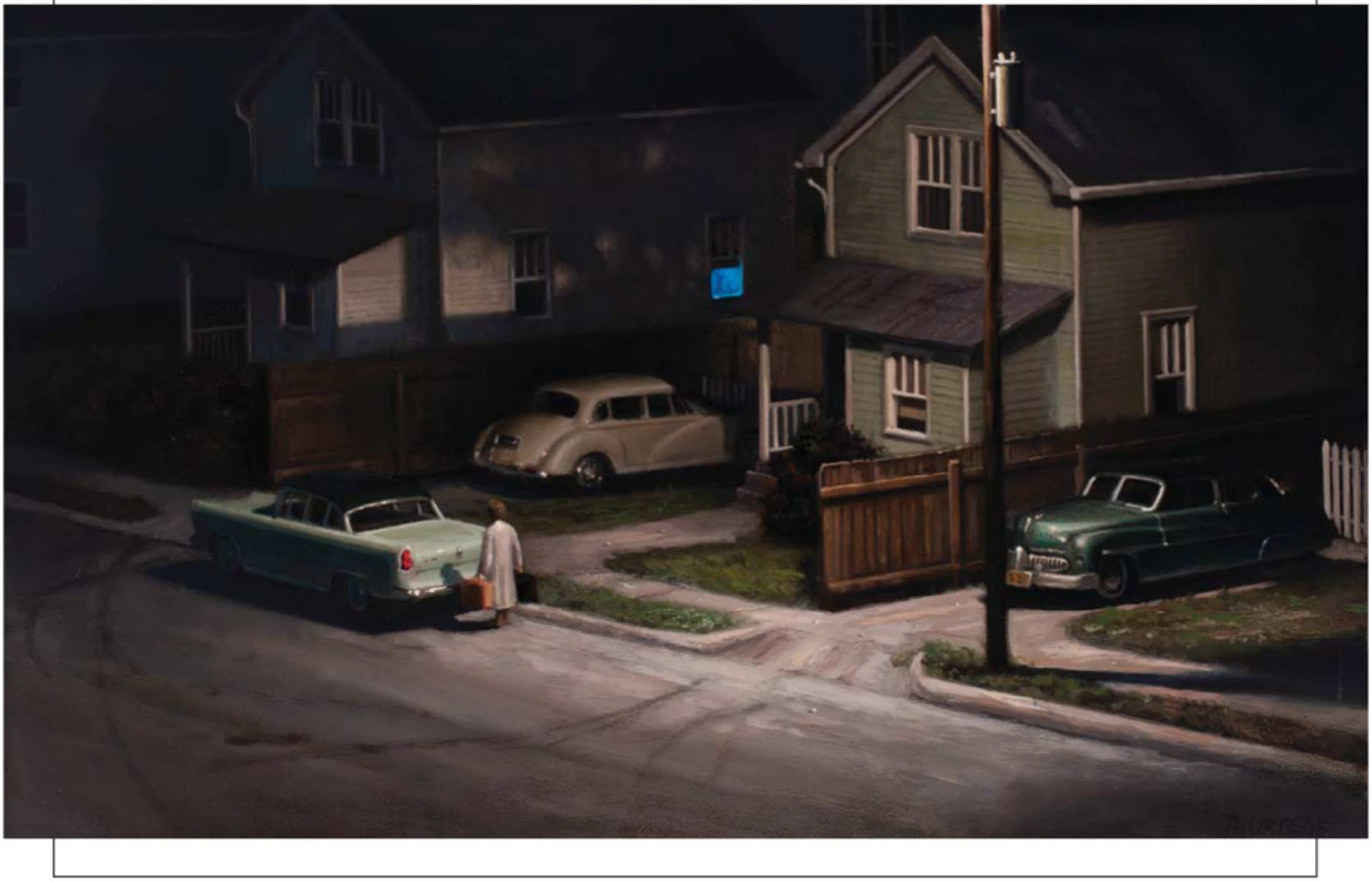
TELLING STORIES

When it comes to creative influences, Alberto Ortega cites a range of sources. “Aside from Edward Hopper [American, 1882–1967], I’m more influenced by literature, films and photography for my narratives,” he says.

“The inspiration I get from painters primarily comes from their mastery of the medium and how they manipulate paint,” he continues. Ortega draws from Dutch painters of the Golden Age, as well as artists such as Diego Velázquez [Spanish, 1599–1660] and Canaletto [Italian, 1697–1768]. “While there are some contemporary painters I admire, such as Neo Rauch [German, b. 1960], my appreciation of their work is more for personal enjoyment.”

It should come as no surprise that Ortega’s journey to becoming an artist is rooted in a lifelong fascination with storytelling. “Although I have always been interested in visual arts, my initial aspiration was to become a writer before I pursued my M.F.A.,” he says.

Ortega notes that he has been deeply influenced by the works of American writers such as Raymond Carver, John Cheever and Richard Ford. “Their ability to capture the subtleties and complexities of everyday life resonated with me and sparked my desire to tell stories,” the artist says. “Even now, literature continues to heavily influence my work.”



THE INTERPLAY OF LIGHT AND SHADOW

Having built his composition and arranged his figures and props, it’s up to Ortega to then light the scene and photograph it. Most of his paintings are in a wide format, giving a distinctly cinematic feel to the compositions; indeed, his enterprise seems more akin to a cinematographer than a painter.

Generally, Ortega chooses to recreate twilight, incorporating passages of deep shadow and dramatic breaks of light. “Twilight has a unique, almost magical quality that transforms ordinary suburban settings into something more mysterious and evocative,” he says. “The interplay of light and shadow during this time creates a sense of intrigue and tension, which aligns perfectly with the themes I explore in my work.”

Once Ortega has landed on a particular image, he’ll often adjust it in Photoshop, carefully refining the composition and fine-tuning placement and balance. Not everything is planned before the painting starts, though. “Elements like skies, trees, certain shadow shapes and other details are worked on from memory,”the artist says.

A CLASSICAL APPROACH

Ortega's painting process is fairly classical. "I typically start with a subdued palette, focusing on value and texture, and then build up the colors using both opaque and transparent layers," he says. "I don't make major changes often; if I need to, I prefer to start a new painting. I improvise at times and often interpret color using reduced palettes to evoke a specific mood." His go-to oil paints are Williamsburg and Michael Harding.

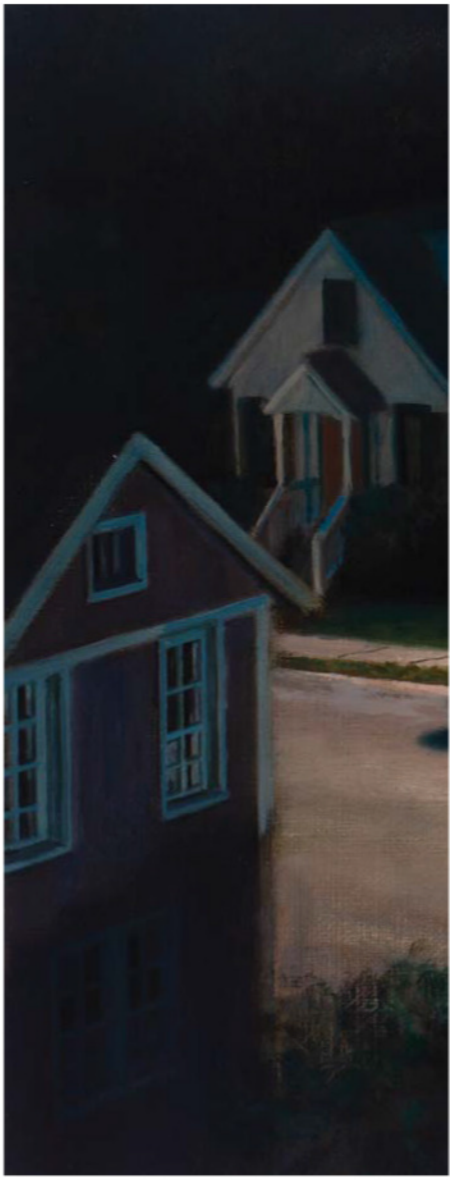
Ortega finds that limiting the color on each canvas is a powerful tool for creating atmosphere. "I try to use just three colors plus white in any given painting to maintain harmony and mood," he says. "I prefer palettes that don't include pure primaries, as they create a more mysterious atmosphere. For example, I might use a palette of yellow-orange, green and violet, or orange, blue-green and blue-purple."

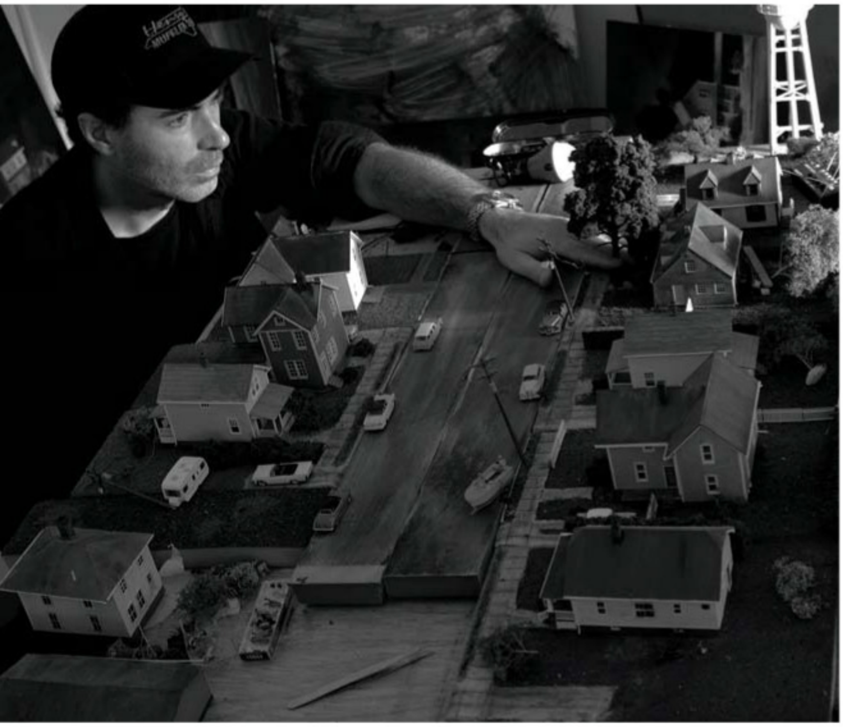
Ortega's paint touch is delicate and varied, creating a rich sense of depth with multiple layers while still allowing the painting to breathe. The finish is fairly realistic but remains painterly, often incorporating somewhat undefined and suggestive areas, particularly in shadows.

Like most artists, Ortega often faces the question of when to stop. "I consider a painting finished when I reach a point where I don't know what else to add, or I feel that any further additions won't enhance it," he says. "Recognizing this moment is the challenging part."

A VOYEURISTIC VIEW

In the end, Ortega's careful preparation yields spectacular results, creating a sense of a complete world—an eerie and compelling parallel of our own in which the viewer's imagination is invited to roam. In *The Clutch* (pages 48–49), a stormy evening sky envelops a suburban street in an almost-otherworldly light. A station wagon is stopped in the street at an awkward angle while a man and woman stand looking at it, each holding a suitcase. Something has obviously happened,

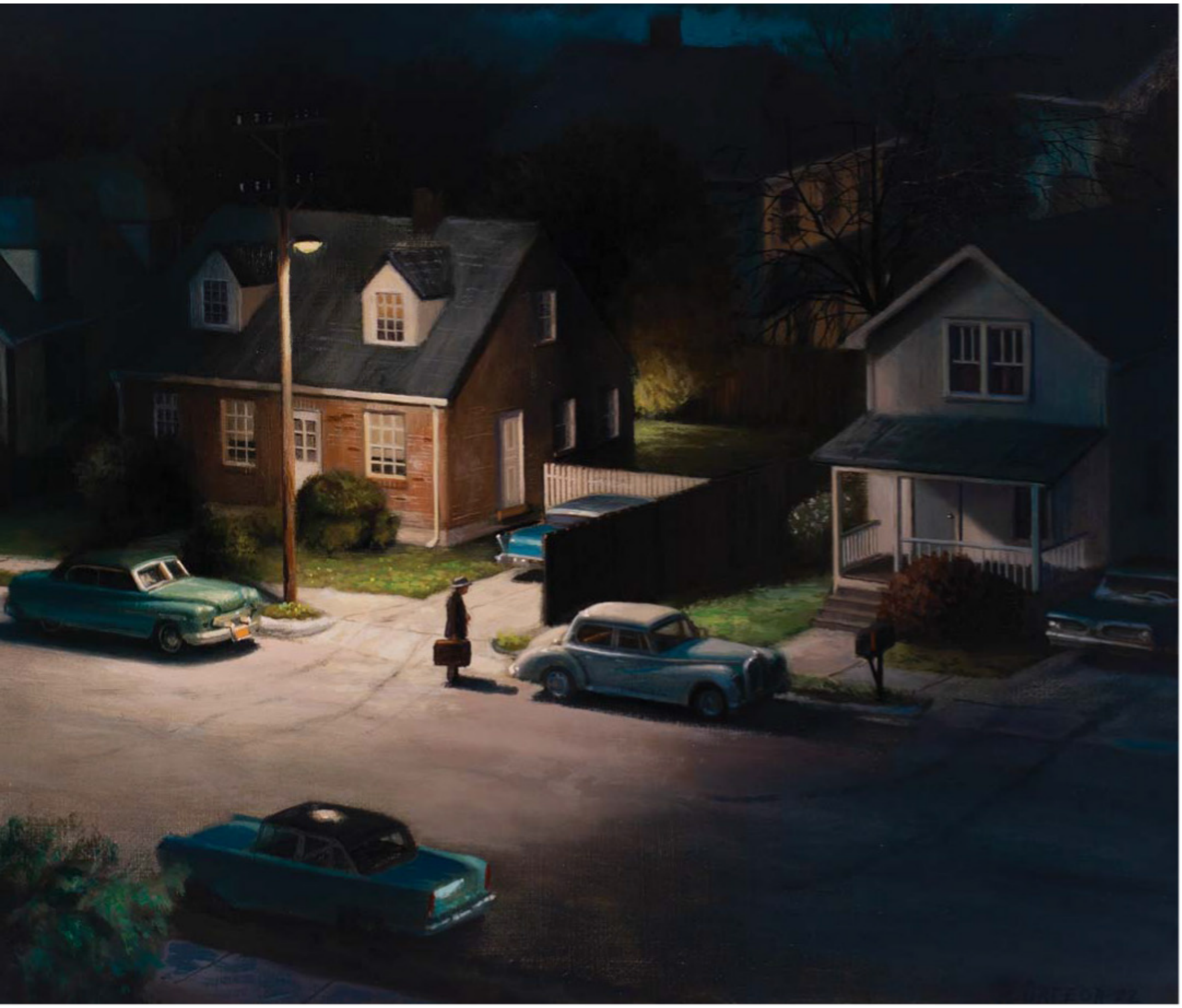




MEET THE ARTIST

Alberto Ortega was born in Sevilla, Spain, in 1976, and earned an M.F.A. from the University of Sevilla. "At the time, it was a five-year program that was very traditional or old school compared to what an M.F.A. program looks like today," he recalls. The artist eventually emigrated to the United States and makes his home in Raleigh, N.C., where he has lived since 2008. He has exhibited his paintings widely in the United States, and his work has garnered many awards. His work was most recently exhibited in "Suburbia: Building the American Dream" at the Center of Contemporary Culture of Barcelona, in Barcelona, Spain, and is represented by Arcadia Contemporary, in New York City.

VISIT HIS WEBSITE AT ALBERTOORTEGA.ART.



Evidence (oil on panel, 16x24)

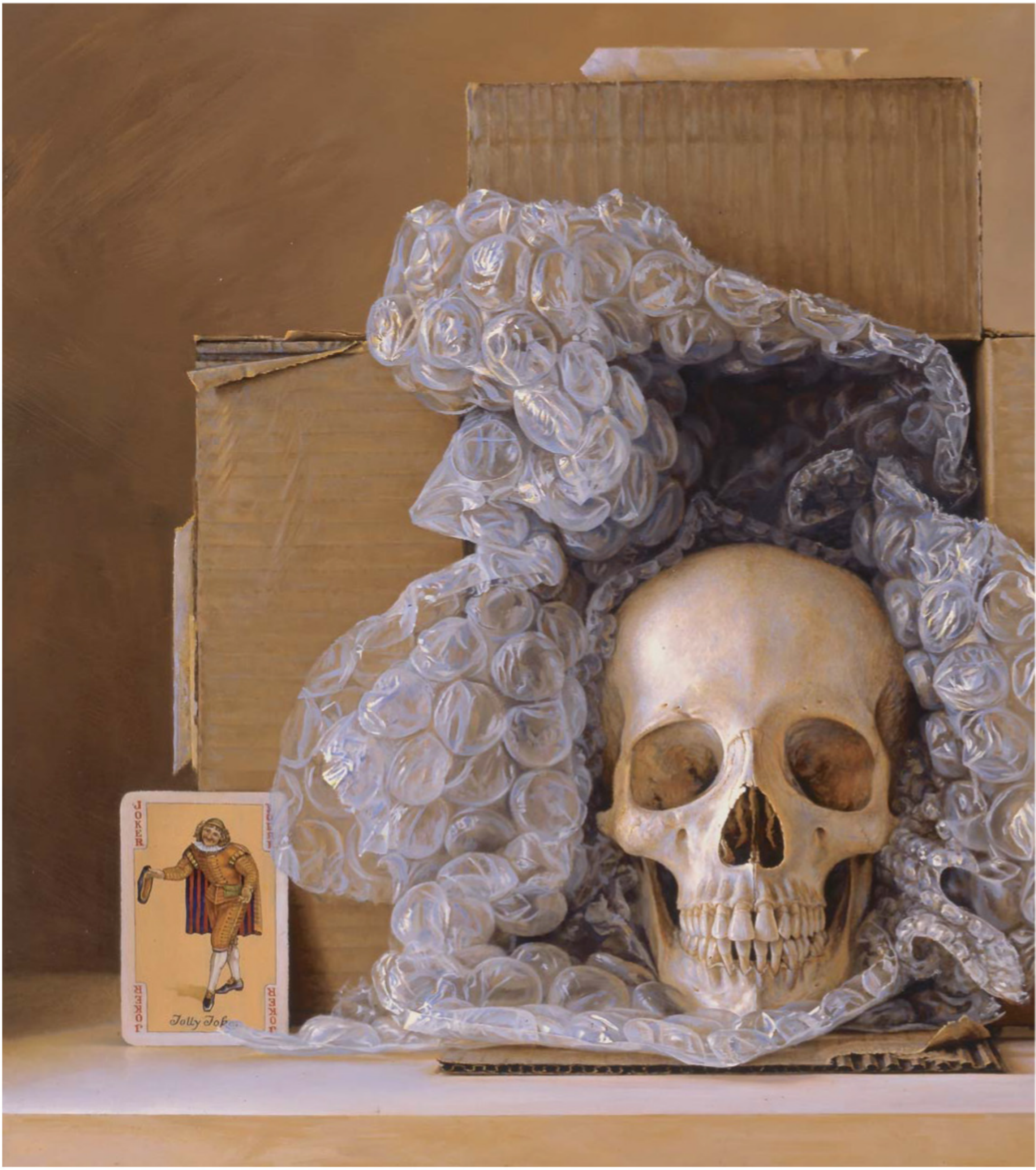
and the title suggests that the car has broken down. We're not sure if the figures are its occupants, perhaps stymied on a journey, or whether they're just wondering why the car is abandoned. The shadowy buildings surrounding them—with their lightless windows—project a soulless and unwelcoming atmosphere.

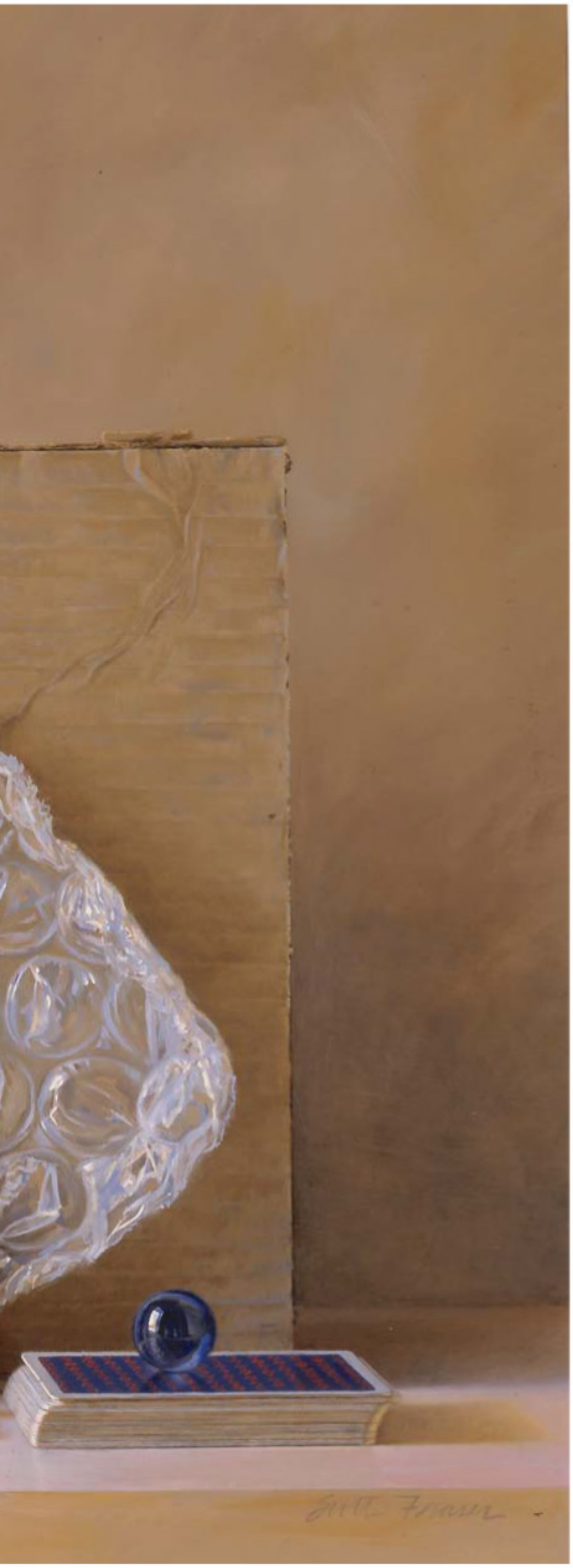
An even more haunting image is *No Surprises* (page 50), in which a forest fire appears to be burning in the low hills behind a suburban street. In the harsh light of a streetlamp, a group of figures can be seen walking, holding suitcases. Is the neighborhood under threat? Are the figures evacuating? Or are they acting together based on some random compulsion, like the folks in '50s horror and sci-fi movies like "The Invasion of the Body Snatchers?" Certainly the safe and predictable world that suburbia promises is something altogether more threatening in this painting.

Sometimes Ortega uses a smaller-scale painting to deliver a powerfully telling narrative in miniature. In *Evidence* (above), a work just 16 by 24 inches, he conjures a late-evening vignette of a suburban street featuring a lone figure, holding two suitcase walking across it. The title suggests that something nefarious is taking place. Is the figure getting rid of some evidence of a crime? Or is the image itself evidence of some wrongdoing? The stillness and darkness of the houses contribute to the sense of unease and foreboding.

As with all of Ortega's paintings, the viewer is left with an open-ended story to ponder and enjoy from a voyeuristic perspective. Cue the Rod Serling voiceover: "You're traveling through another dimension, a dimension not only of sight and sound but of mind … a journey into a wondrous land whose boundaries are that of imagination. That's the signpost up ahead. Your next stop: "The Twilight Zone."

John A. Parks is a painter, a writer and a member of the faculty at the School of Visual Arts, in New York City.


JOKER
Jolly Jok



Thin Fragile Line (oil on board, 20x60)

MASTER OF *Quirk*

Scott Fraser paints highly detailed, exquisitely peculiar still lifes that blend elements of the sublime and the macabre.

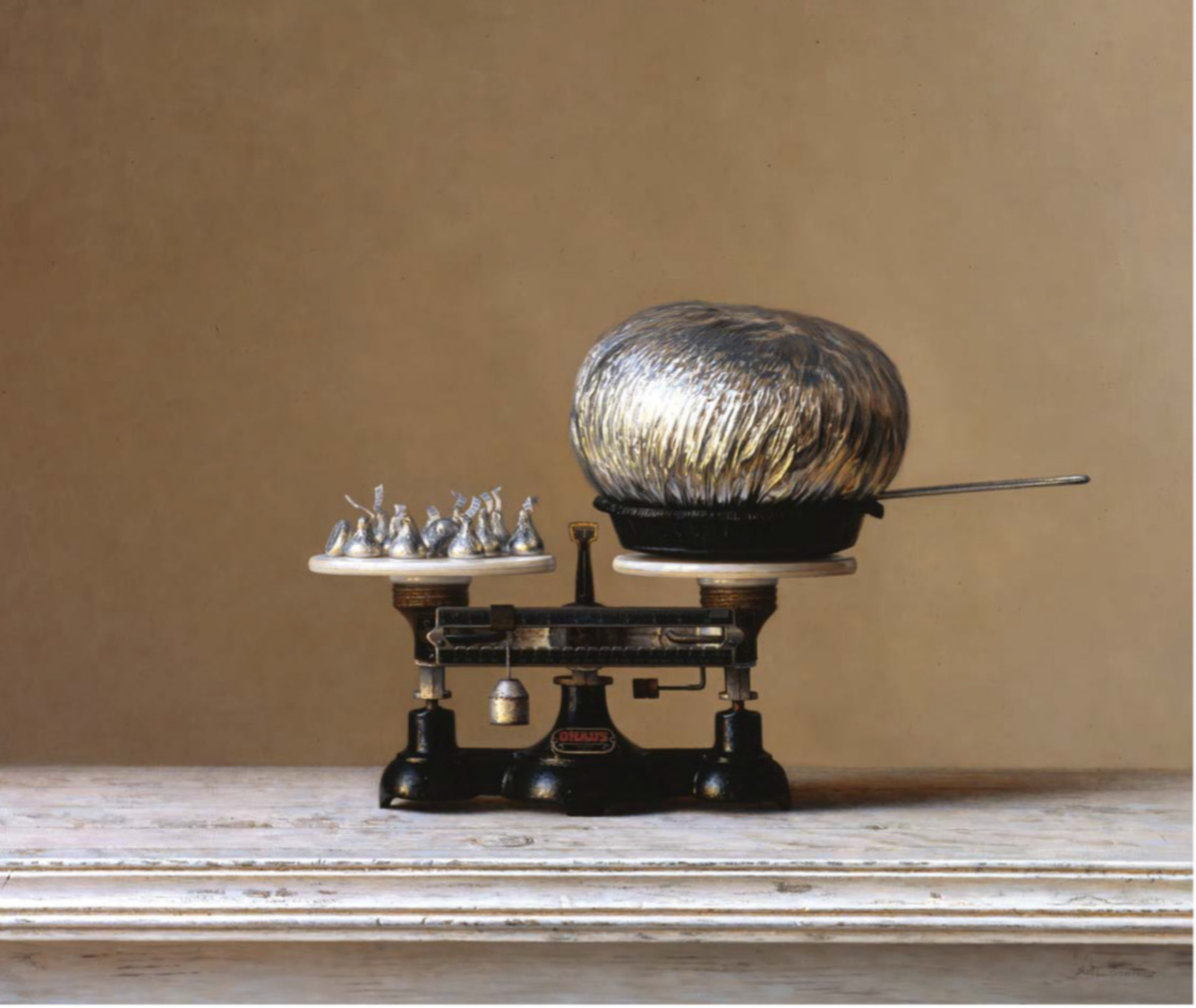
By Colleen Smith

Scott Fraser began creating art when he was between 2 and 3 years old. "I still have my first painting. It's a watercolor of roses, and it hangs on a wall I walk past every day," he says. "It's abstract, but I remember painting it and thinking, 'This is a rose.' I was very proud of that."

A significant early influence and inspiration for Fraser came through the Art Institute of Chicago, near his hometown. When his parents realized his aptitude for painting, they began frequenting the museum with the young artist, who took an early interest in works by Pablo Picasso (Spanish, 1881–1973), Winslow Homer (American, 1836–1910) and pointillist painters such as Georges Seurat (French, 1859–91).

Fraser's passion for art continued to develop and evolve throughout his childhood and adolescence. Eventually, he went on to attend the Kansas City Art Institute (KCAI), and he's quick to acknowledge the tremendous influence that Kansas City's Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art had on him during his college years.

After leaving KCAI, Fraser started entering art shows on a regular basis. "I won some awards, including cash prizes, and started to receive invitations to other shows," he says. He then put together a body of work for a solo gallery show; however, the host gallery ended up closing within a year. "I thought my life was over," Fraser says. In fact, his illustrious painting career was only just beginning.



DELECTABLE DEPICTIONS

Currently based in Longmont, Colo., Fraser works from a spacious home studio resplendent with the bright light of the Front Range. “Colorado inspires me, especially the light,” he says. “It adds a luminosity to my color palette that it’s just not possible to get when painting in artificial light—or even in other regions of the country. We get more than 300 days of sunlight per year, and I love living here for that reason.”

Many of Fraser’s paintings display his offbeat sense of humor. His signature works are, in a word, quirky. He has painted eyeballs on golf tees, mandala-like spirals featuring candy corn and handcuffs, and a skull hooded in bubble wrap in *Thin Fragile Line* (pages 56–57). “The quirky kept evolving, and one piece grew out of the next,” he says. “There’s a certain amount of daring with them. I like that element of risk—jumping off a cliff with a crazy idea. In my art school years, they pushed us to incorporate risk-taking and to ask, ‘What are you doing that’s different?’ ”

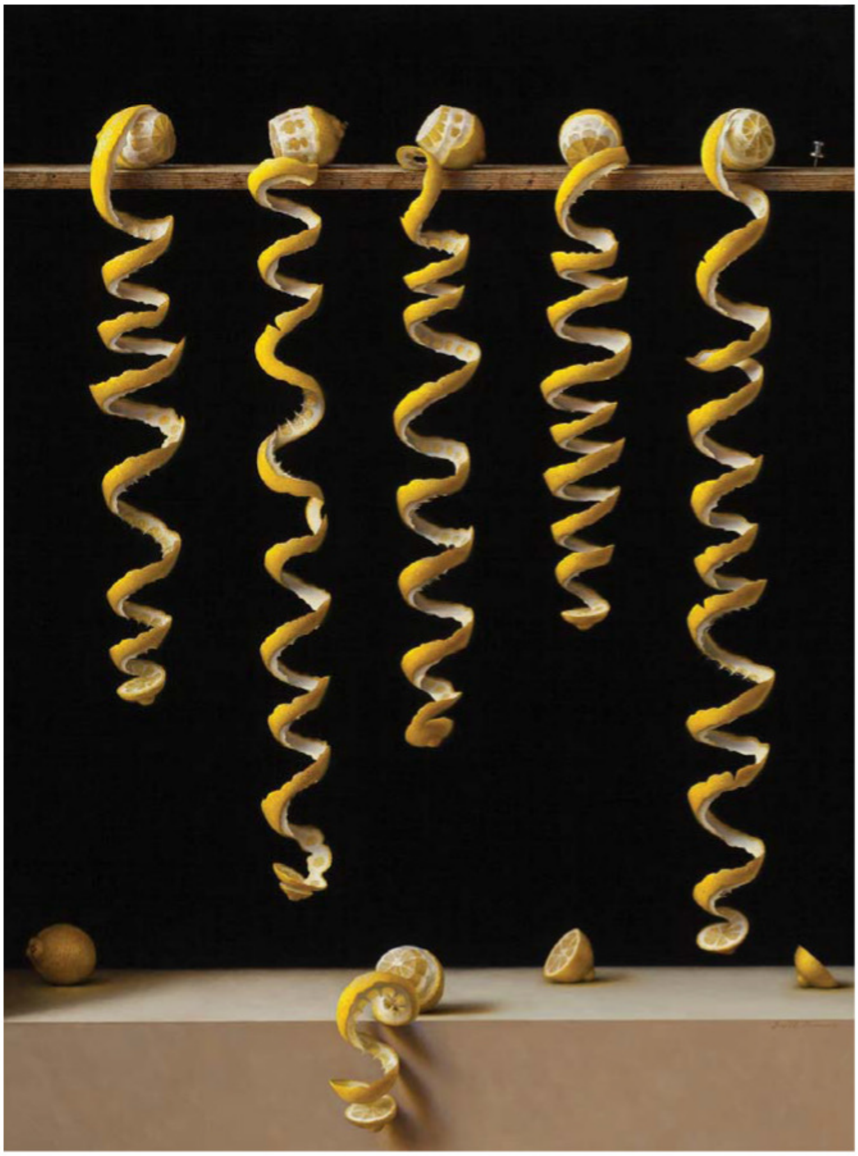
At the time of this interview, the artist was working on yet another painting for his “Chocolate Kisses” series. On his easel, the piece sat sanded and scraped—evidence of a struggle—no surprise given the great degree of difficulty involved in the crinkly, reflective subject matter. “I’m pulling my hair out because they’re shiny objects against a white background,” he says.

The series was inspired by Fraser’s admiration for the late Wayne Thiebaud (American, 1920–2021), who painted saccharine desserts. Thiebaud’s famous “Confections” series represented a sweet spot for Fraser’s own painting trajectory. *Shiny Things* (above), the first painting in Fraser’s “Chocolate Kisses” series, depicts a still life setup of an antique scale with Hershey’s Kisses on one side and, opposite, a skillet containing the telltale poofed-up aluminum foil of Jiffy Pop popcorn.

OPPOSITE
Shiny Things
(oil on board,
24¾x72)

LEFT
Five Lemons
(oil on board,
44x33½)

BELOW
Saint Sebastian III (oil on board,
13½x14)



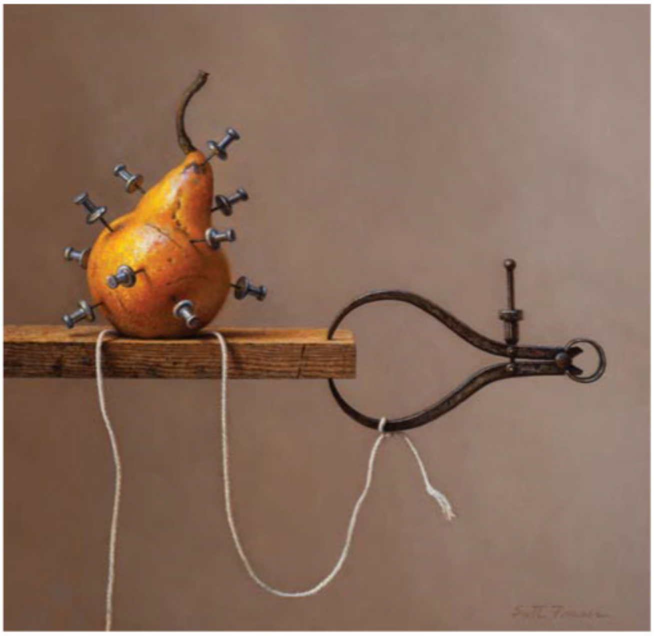
Along with Fraser's sweets, of course, come his sours. Works such as *Five Lemons* (left) depict partially peeled fruit with yellow skins dangling in curlicues like citrus snakes. He also painted a series of works featuring bruised pears covered in Band-Aids, stuck with push pins and squeezed in vices. *Saint Sebastian III* (below) is one example.

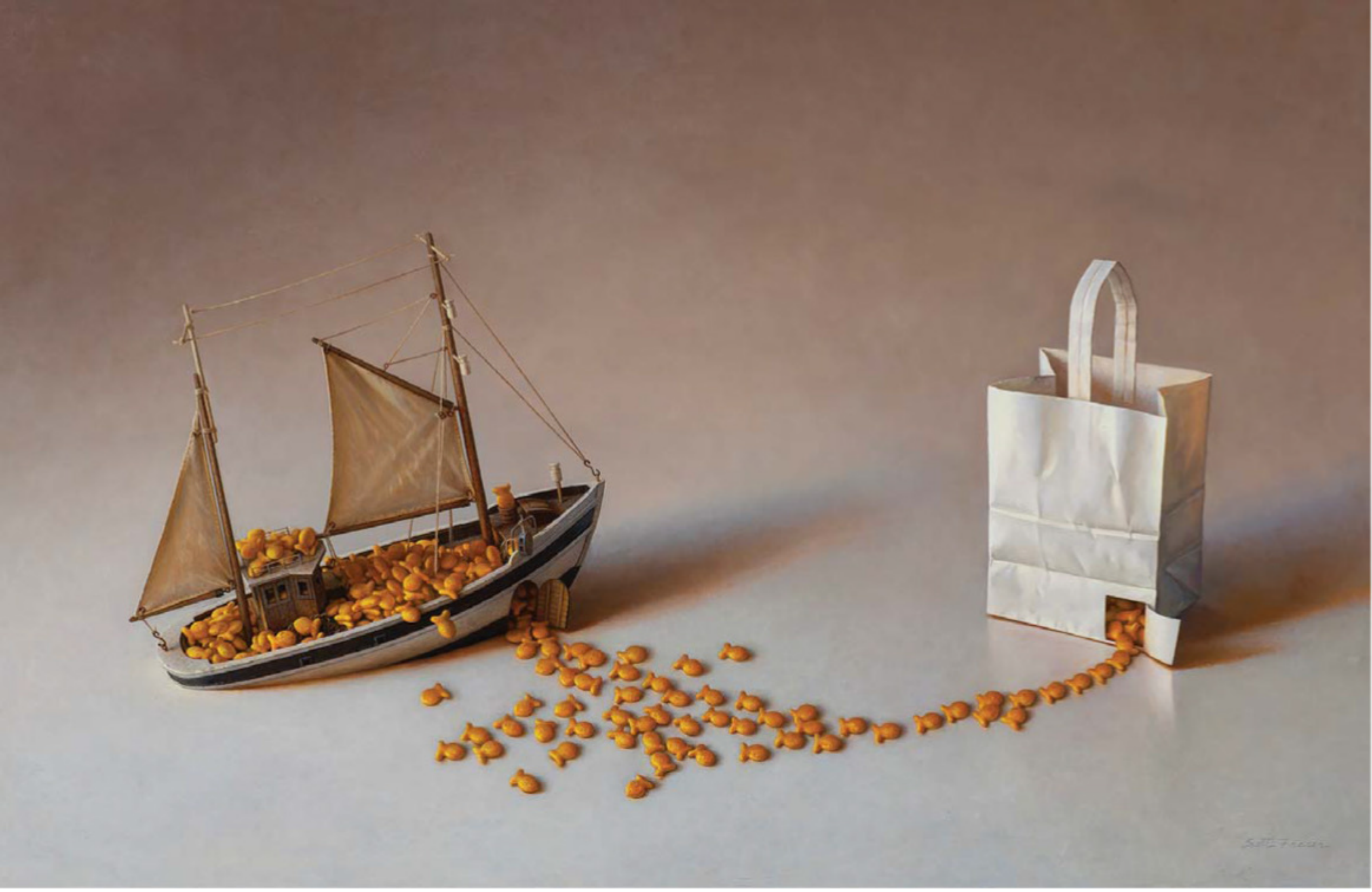
Goldfish crackers are another recurring subject that feature heavily in the artist's work. They're often depicted splashing across notebook paper, swimming in schools through Styrofoam cups, and, in the case of *Sinking Ship* (page 60), leaping in arcs between a toy boat and a paper bag.

Fraser's decidedly different still lifes are somewhat akin to works by his peer and compatriot, Daniel Sprick—another realist painter based in Colorado. "Scott Fraser has spent a lifetime painting meticulous still-life from direct observation, always insisting on quality over quantity," says Sprick. "He's a tremendous inspiration for me."

Both artists have a propensity for painting skeletons. "Dan Sprick and I have been known to 'share' bones," Fraser says. "He sent me a frog skeleton years ago, and I just got around to painting it." It's featured in his macabre piece *Snacks* (page 61), which depicts insects served up as morsels for the hungry skeletal frog.

The bones, insects, Hershey's Kisses and Goldfish crackers add an





> **"MY WORK CAN BE QUIRKY AND HAVE ELEMENTS OF THE ABSURD … BUT MY COMPOSITIONS ALWAYS CONTAIN ELEMENTS THAT CONNECT ME TO A PERSON, PLACE OR EVENT THAT HAS REAL MEANING TO ME."** —SCOTT FRASER

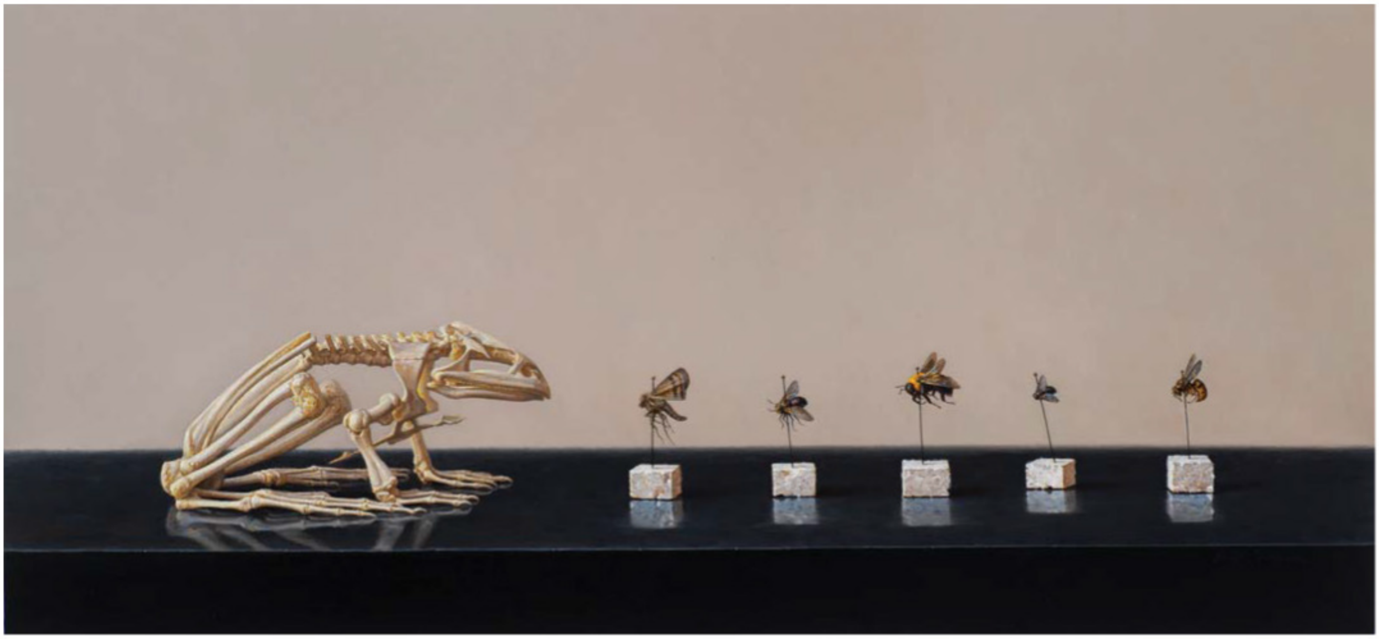
element of absurdity that complements the morbid and goofy humor Fraser finds in everyday life. "My work can be quirky and have elements of the absurd, and some of my pieces get quite dark," he says, "but my compositions always contain elements that connect me to a person, place or event that has real meaning to me."

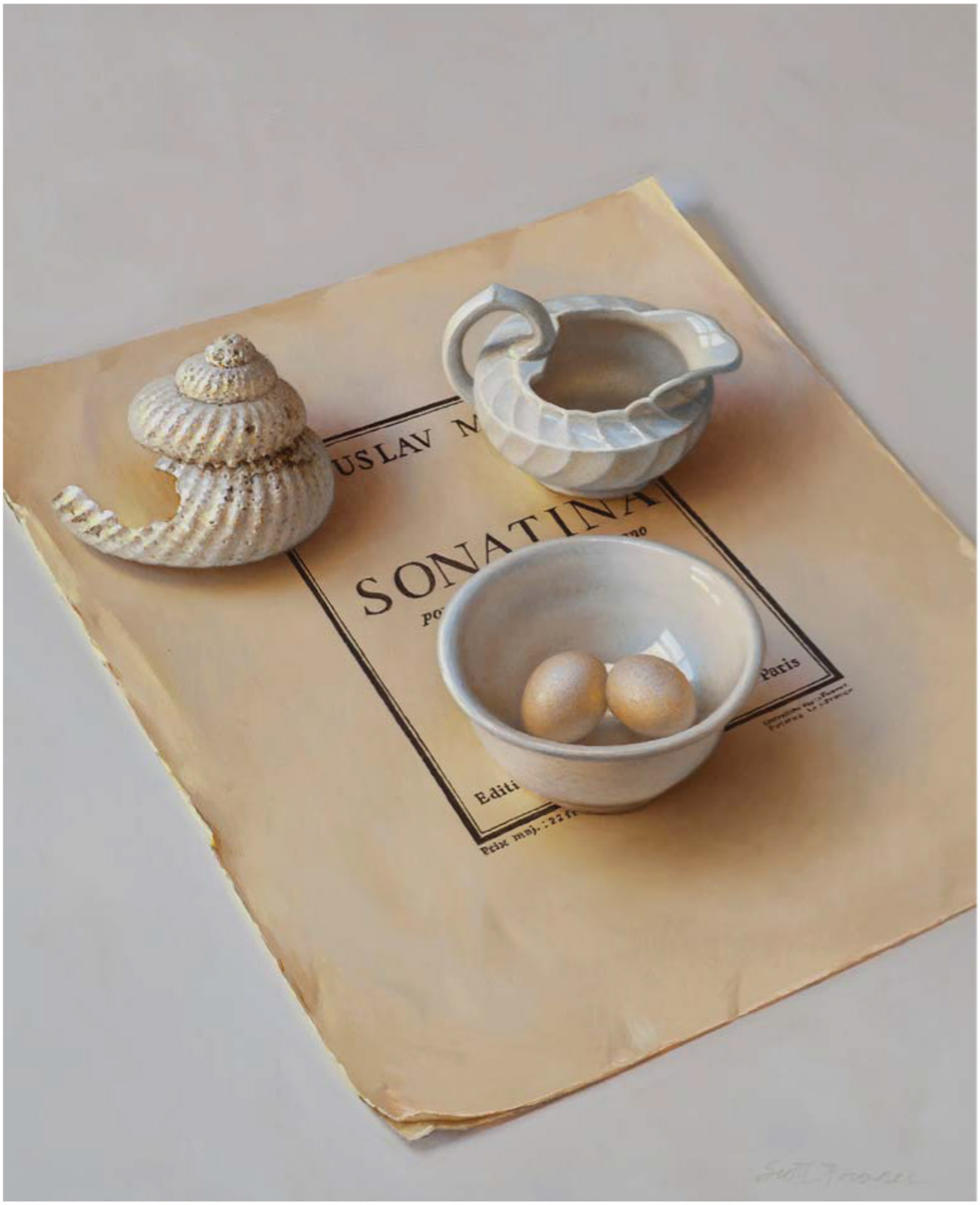
ON A SERIOUS NOTE

Richard Estes (American, 1932–) is another artist whose work has deeply impacted Fraser. He first encountered the photorealist's paintings in the late 1970s at Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, when he was a student at KCAI. "I must've seen 40 pieces by Richard Estes at a gallery exhibition I attended," Fraser says. "It changed me. I got a lot more serious."

Fraser's works are often labeled "whimsical," but the artist doesn't like that word as he feels it's "too cutesy" a descriptor. "I'm a serious painter," he affirms. Beyond his execution of the somewhat silly, Fraser's oeuvre does indeed include the sublime. In a series following a more traditional vein, sheet music heavily figures into the artist's still-life setups—a nod to his wife, Bronwyn Fraser, a classical clarinetist now retired from the Boulder Philharmonic.

The couple enjoys hiking together, and Fraser draws inspiration from their nature walks, resulting in paintings that celebrate seashells, birds' nests and other natural elements, as seen in works such as *Sonatina* (opposite). "People send me shells and rocks," says Fraser. "I'll pick up a lot of dead bugs and nests and sticks. I'll pick up 30 sticks, bundle them, set them up on a shelf and do a painting of that, or rocks in a jar."




USLAV N
SONATINA
Paris
Editi
Prix maj.: 22 fr

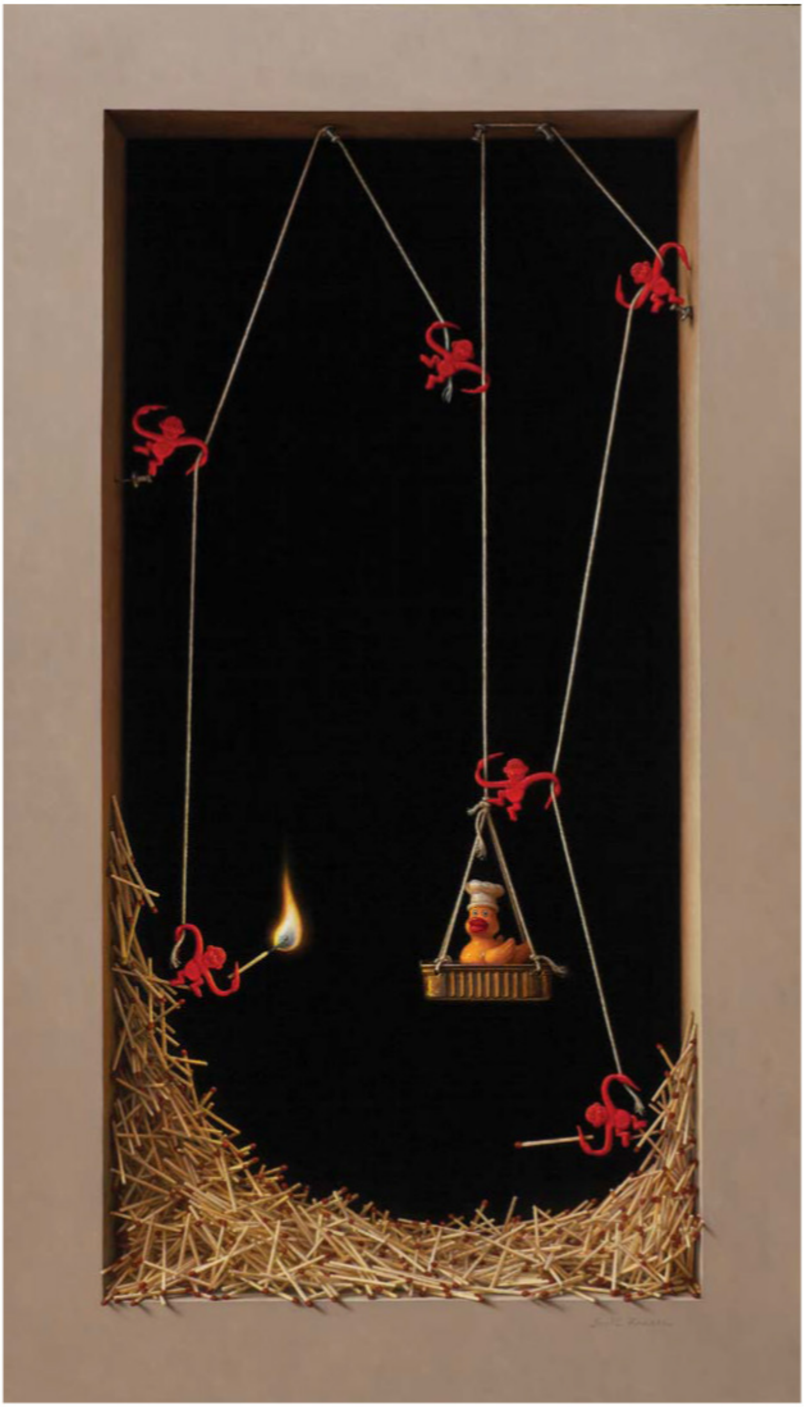
OPPOSITE
Sinking Ship
(oil on board,
28x43)

ABOVE
Snacks
(oil on board,
11½x25)

LEFT
Sonatina
(oil on board,
15x12)

RIGHT
Monkey inferno IV
(oil on board, 43x28)

OPPOSITE
Study in White VI
(oil on board, 30x34)



The artist has found that he enjoys the control painting still life affords him. "It's relatively easy to set up a still life," he says. "I can control the light. I can sit inside and paint from life. I'm not locked into a reference photo. However elaborate, I can build my own scene. Then I can either copy what I see, or I can take liberties—whatever is best for the painting."

On the far end of Fraser's serious spectrum is his elegant "White" series, which includes compositions with white cups and saucers on a white table or, as with *Study in White VI* (opposite) a white ceramic teapot, an egg, a head of garlic, a ball of string, a roll of paper towels and a chef's papery toque on a bleached animal skull—all arranged on a table covered in a white tablecloth. "I'm slightly color blind, so I tend to not use as much color as some other artists," Fraser says.

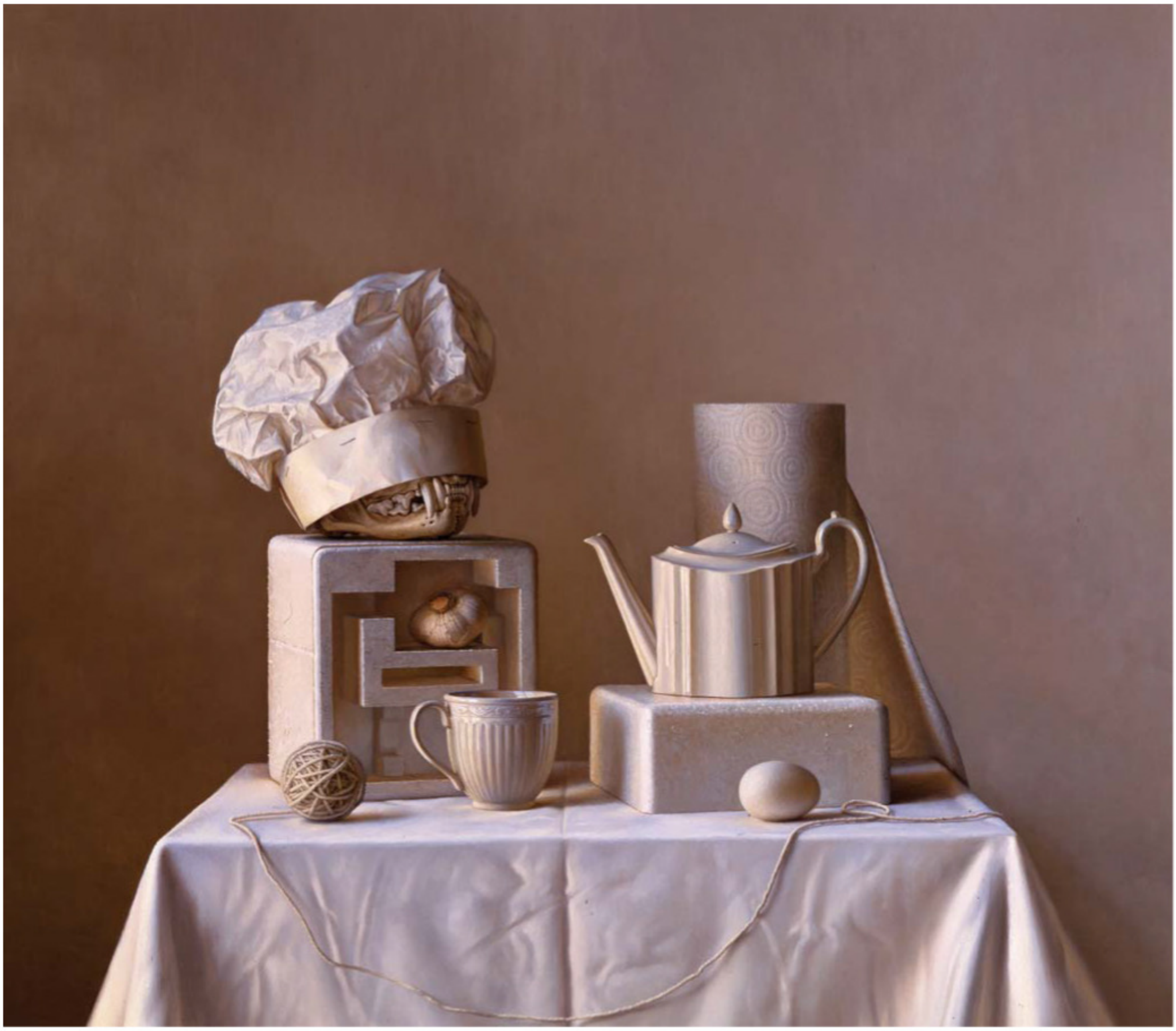
A WIDE APPEAL

Indicative of his extraordinary talent, and in contrast to his disappointing gallery start, today Fraser enjoys representation across the nation. His works hang in galleries in Cody, Wyo., Naples, Fla., and San Francisco, as well as in Aspen, Vail and Denver.

And at Quidley & Company Fine Arts, on Nantucket, Mass., Fraser's works sell out within a few days, according to gallerist Chris Quidley, who has represented the artist since 2012. "We've been hugely successful with his work. There's a good demand for his paintings, and that's a testament to his strength as an artist," says Quidley, who will open another solo show of Fraser's work on June 27. "He has a wonderful collector base—including museums—and his art is important enough to go into good collections," adds Quidley, who includes Fraser's paintings in his family's private art collection. "We're representing him not just because it's a business opportunity, but because I'm a huge personal fan of his work."

Many adjectives have been used to describe Fraser's paintings: intense, thoughtful, quirky, eccentric; but above all, there's a sense of the personal in his unique compositions. The enormous appeal the works hold is owed both to the artist's mastery and his mysterious presentation of the recognizable objects of everyday existence. In composing paintings that weave a narrative and capture the imagination, Fraser creates the kind of art that lingers in the viewer's mind.

Colleen Smith is a Denver-based author, creative director and screenwriter.



MEET THE ARTIST

Scott Fraser has been featured in publications such as *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *ARTnews*, *Art Daily* and *The Denver Post*, among others. His work hangs in public and private collections across the United States, as well as major museums, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York City; the Philbrook Museum of Art, in Tulsa; San Francisco's de Young Museum; and the Denver Art Museum. His book, *Scott Fraser: Selected Works*, is available from Schiffer Publishing. The artist lives and works in Longmont, Colo.

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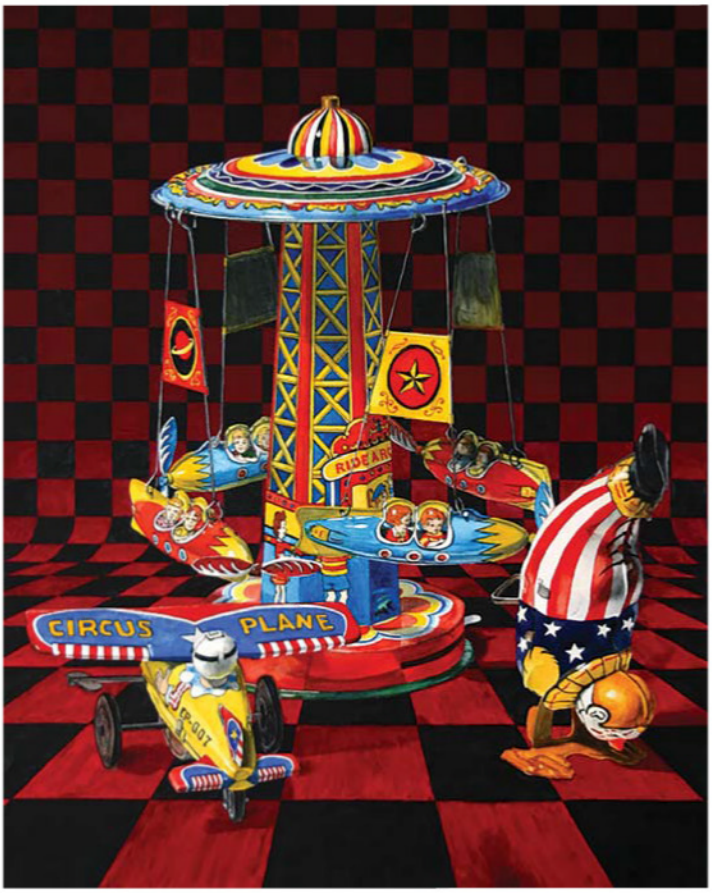
Painting Nostalgia in Realism

Childhood toys and vintage materials take center stage in watercolor paintings that capture the charm of simpler times.

By Laurin McCracken

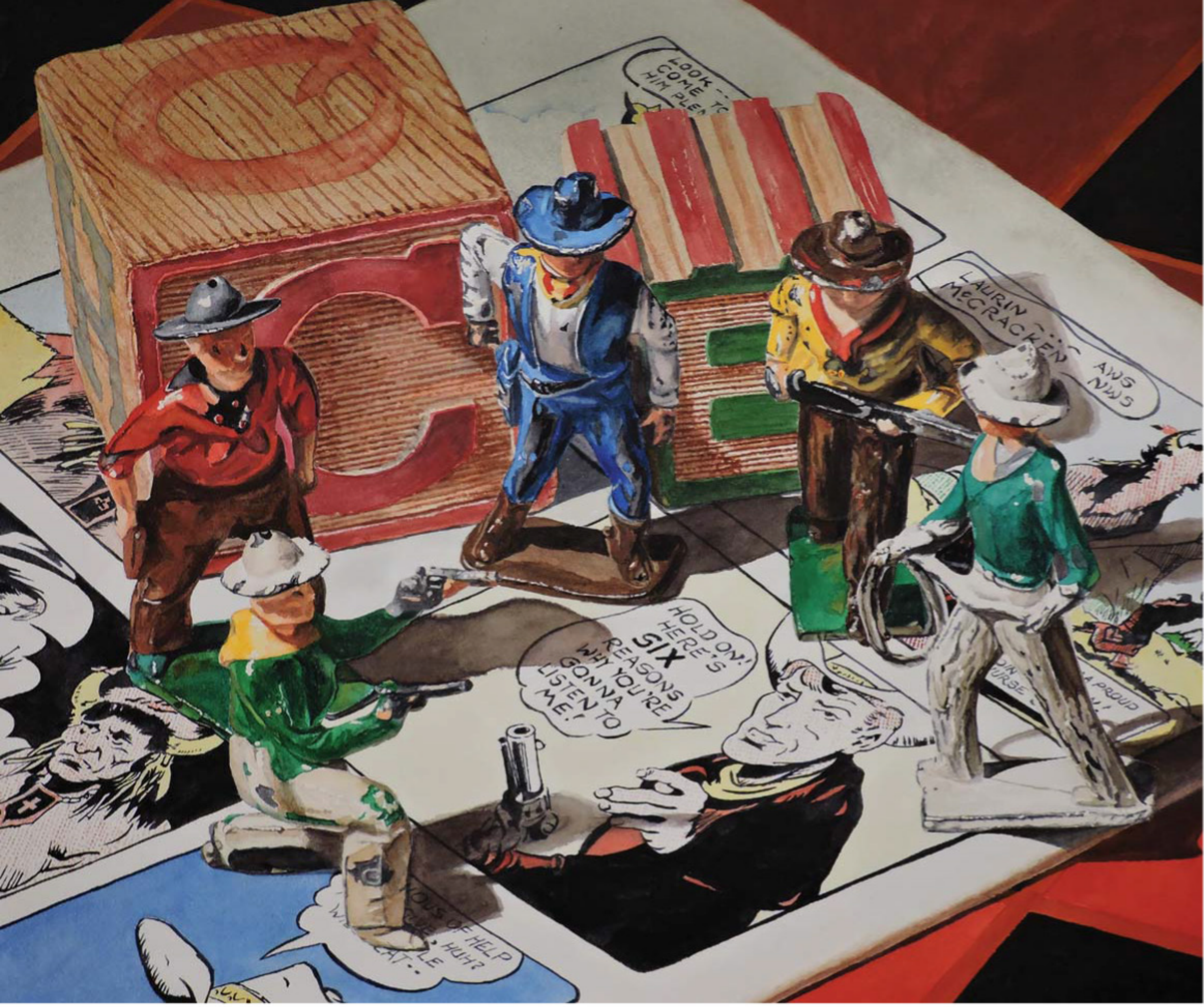


Paintings with a strong reference to nostalgia sell well at almost any art gallery. Paintings that remind viewers of the happy days of their childhood sell even better.

Several years ago, I created my first still-life paintings featuring toys I had played with as a child. Since then, I've collected vintage objects—comic books, small books and lead cowboy figures—for use in my nostalgia-leaning watercolor pieces such as *Six Reasons* (opposite, top) and *Ride a Rocket* (right).

Using objects from my collection, I recently set out to create a tableau based on Red Ryder, the fictional cowpoke hero and justice seeker featured in the long-running Western comic strip created by Stephen Slesinger and artist Fred Harman that premiered in 1940. Harman (American, 1902–82) was recognized in his era as a fine artist who worked in pen and ink, and brush and ink, emphasizing perspective and action.

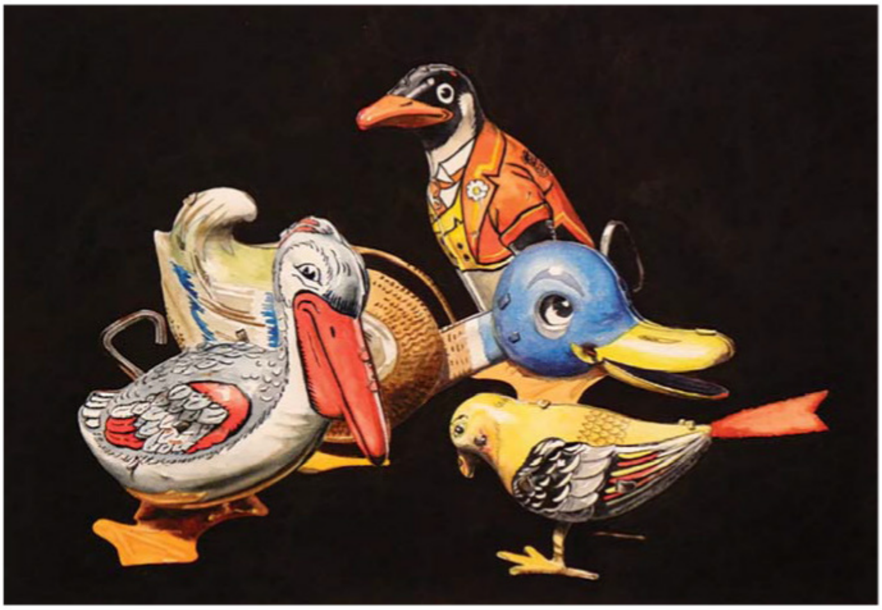
While Red Ryder began as a comic-book series, it quickly evolved into licensing and merchandising products, including a radio program, movies, toys, sporting equipment and the Red Ryder BB gun. My recent discovery of vintage Better Little Books about the crime-fighting cowboy inspired me to create the painting, *Count Me In, Red Ryder*. Saddle up for the step-by-step demonstration on the following pages.


LOOK... COME HIM PLEA
LAURIN MCCRACKEN
HOLD ON! HERE'S SIX REASONS WHY YOU'RE GONNA LISTEN TO ME!

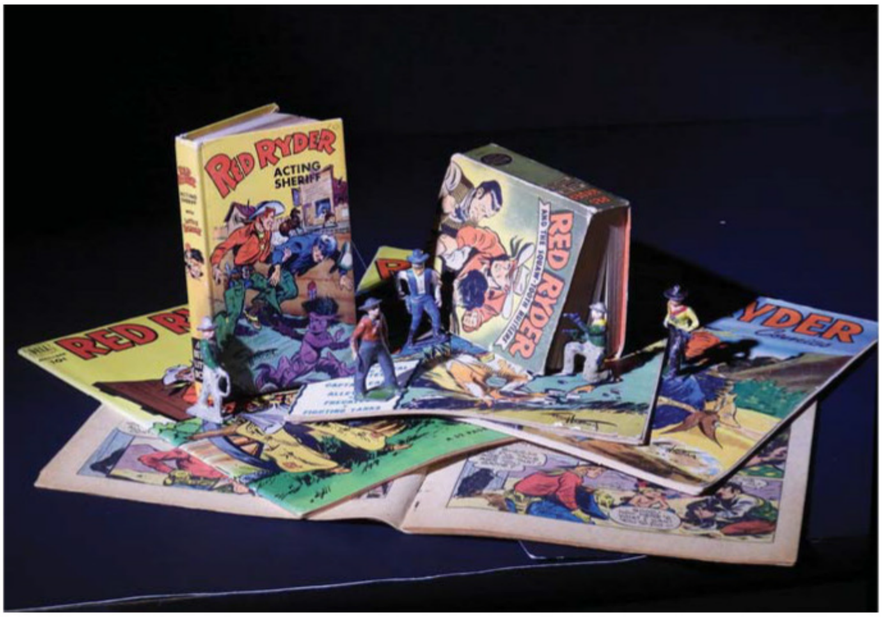
OPPOSITE
Ride a Rocket
(watercolor on paper, 24x19)

ABOVE
Six Reasons
(watercolor on paper, 20x24)

RIGHT
Wind Up
(watercolor on paper, 11x16)



DEMONSTRATION: *COUNT ME IN, RED RYDER*



MATERIALS

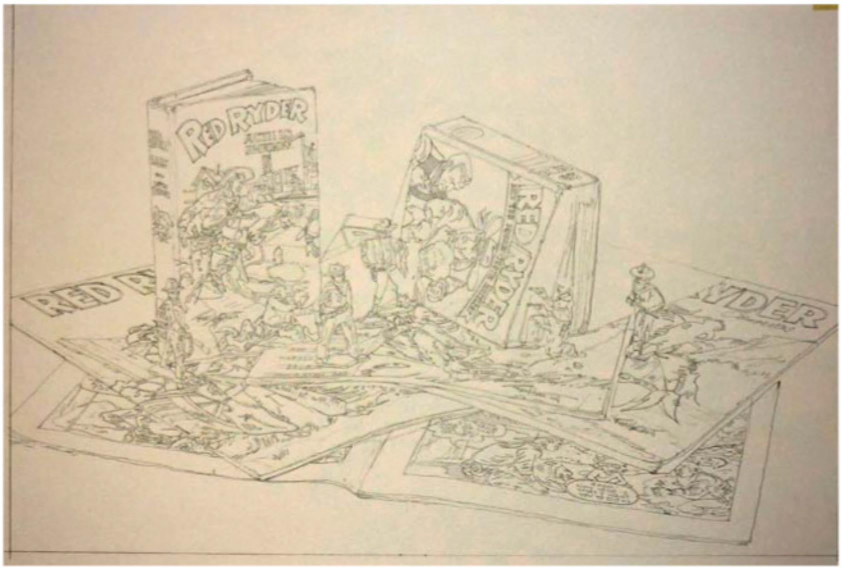
- **Paper:** Fabriano Artistico 300-lb. soft-pressed paper
- **Paint:** Daniel Smith watercolors
- **Brushes:** Escoda Chronos Nos. 4, 6, 8 and 10 rounds
- **Miscellaneous:** 2H lead; mechanical pencil holder; Artograph projector (no longer in production); Epson XP-15000 printer; Duck EasyLiner clear plastic; Nichiban tape (24mm and 40mm widths); masking fluid; No. 1 X-Acto knife handle with No. 11 blades

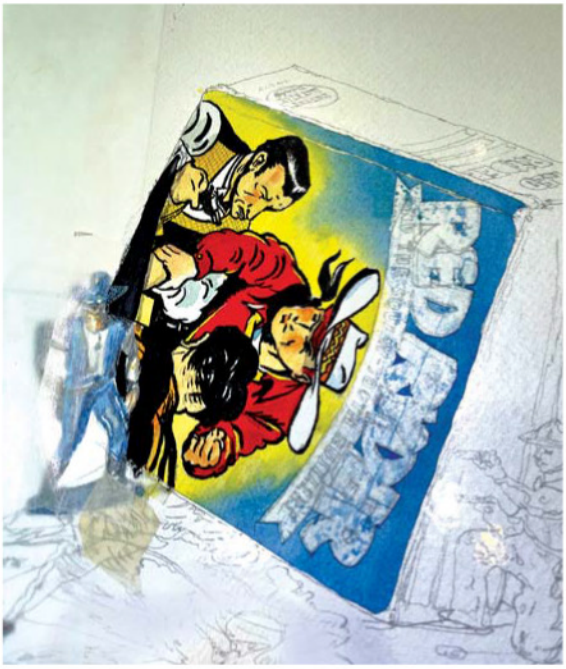
REFERENCE PHOTO

I initially arranged the comics, books and metal figures on a large checkerboard background that I had used in earlier still-life paintings; however, I determined that the pattern competed with the busy colors of the objects. I finally settled on my signature black background. I took quite a lot of reference photos, moving the objects into various positions, until I landed on a pleasing composition and distribution of color. In the center of the setup, I staged a "shoot-out" between Red Ryder (center figure) and the "bad" cowboys surrounding him. I painted Red Ryder's clothing and hat to complement those seen in the book just behind him.

STEP 1

Once I'd settled on the photo of the arrangement I wanted to use for reference, I projected the image onto a wall on which I'd taped a sheet of watercolor paper. (I used a high-resolution 1,000 lumen digital projector in a semi-dark room.) I kept a 13x10-inch photo print of the still life setup handy while I drew with 2H lead in a mechanical pencil holder. I relied on a midweight line for the majority of the scene; a heavyweight line around the major objects and the highlights; and a lightweight line for shadows and small details.



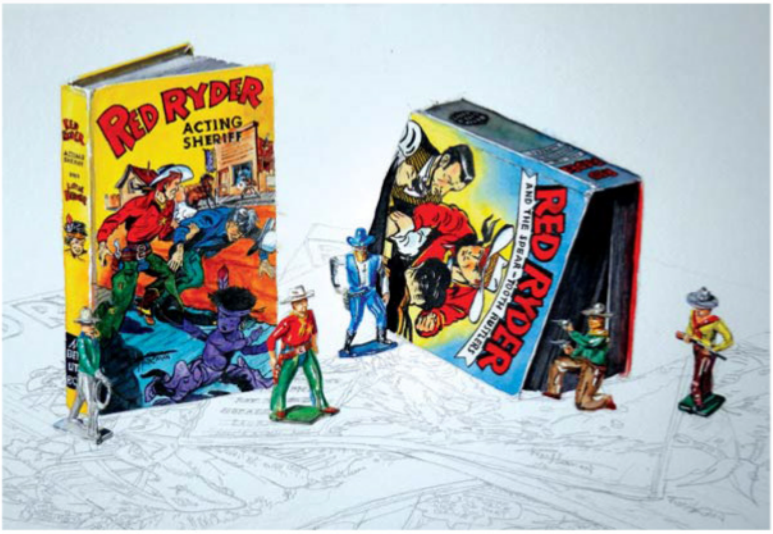


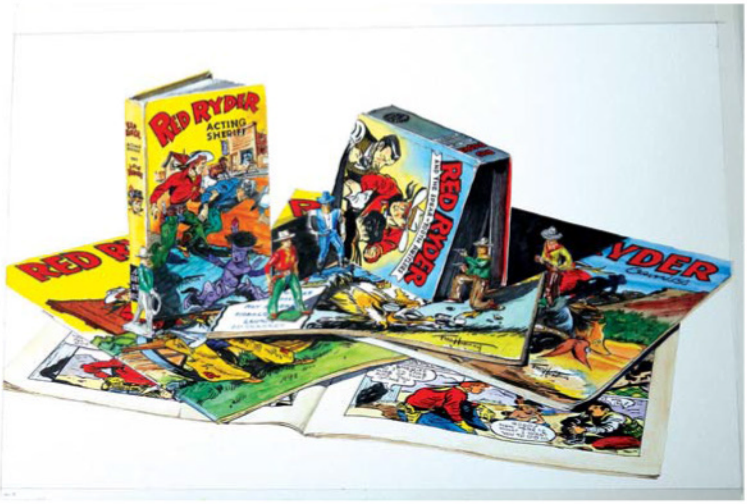
STEP 2

I used a variety of masking options, including clear plastic and masking tape. After applying a layer of clear plastic to the paper (See Tip 2: Masking Masterfully, page 70), I used an X-Acto knife to cut out the shape of the cowboy figure, which I painted before starting the book. I then cut out the book. Next, I taped over the cowboy and the large lettered section, burnishing the tape carefully before I began painting the detailed area. I used Nichiban tape, as it's very translucent and enabled me to see the details as I cut the tape away.

STEP 3

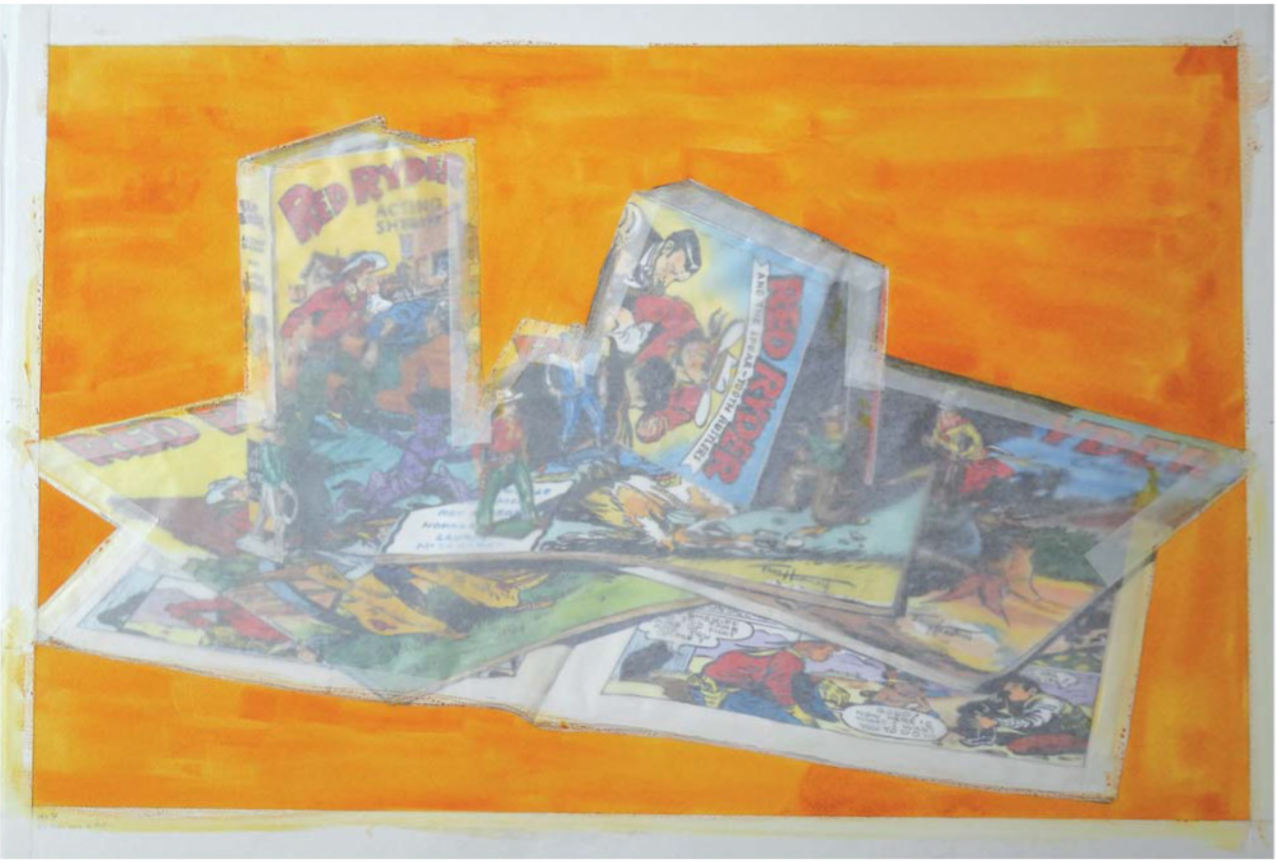
I moved from left to right, top to bottom, as I painted. I cut away the plastic covering as I reached an area and then masked the edges with Nichiban tape as I worked on the details. I applied liquid masking fluid in areas in which it was necessary to save critical highlights.

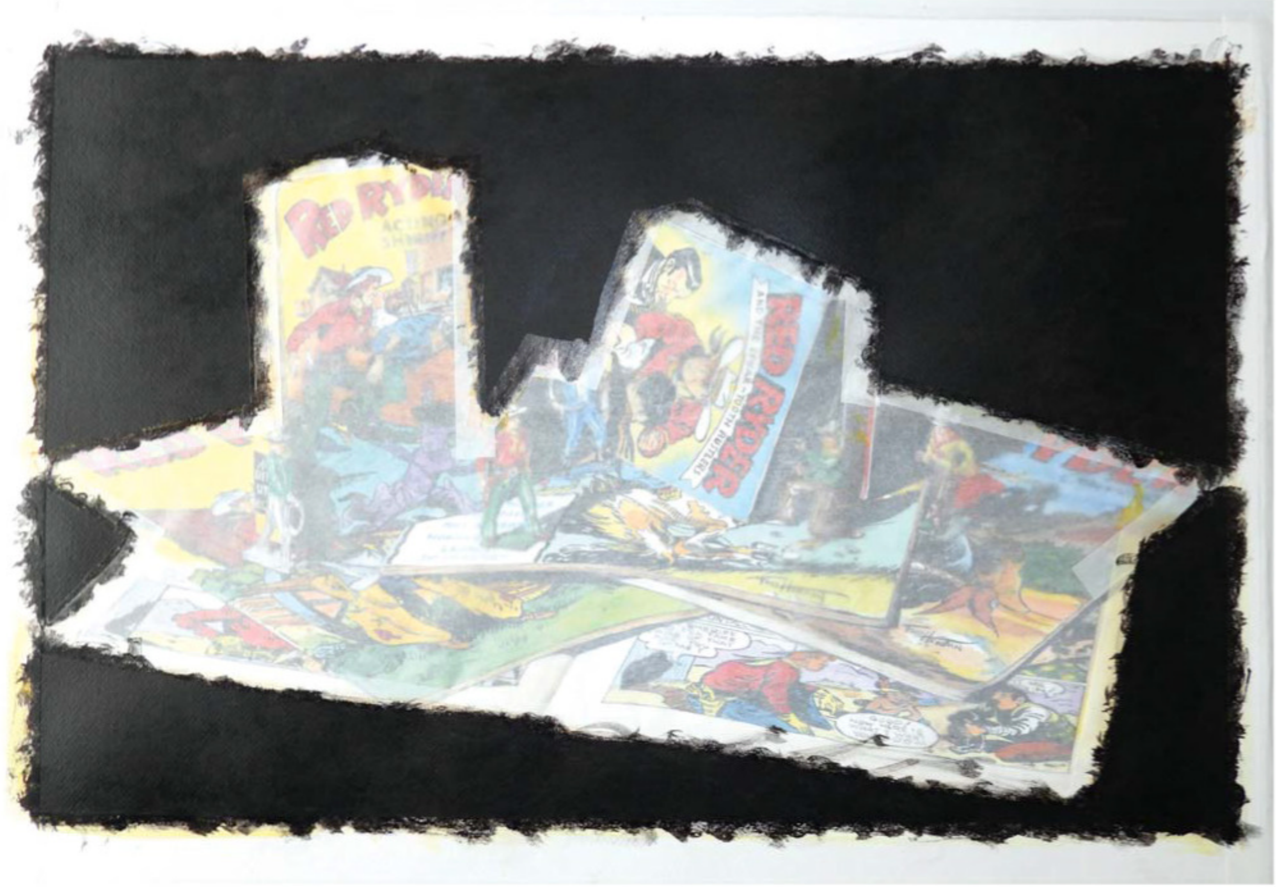


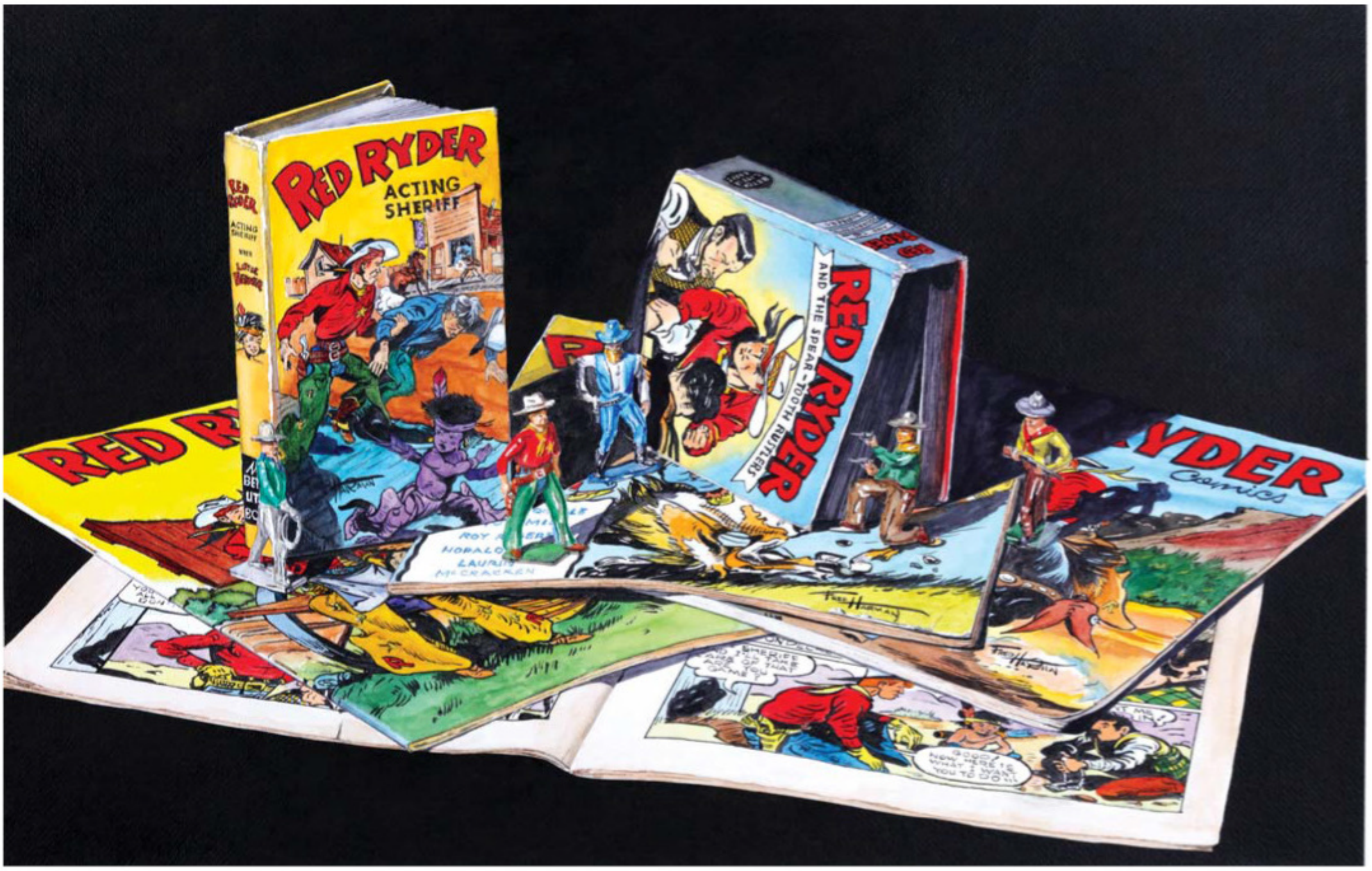


STEP 4

I finished painting all of the objects in the still life using a wide variety of Daniel Smith watercolors. Many of the objects, especially the books, were very worn. I cleaned them up a bit while keeping a sense of the loving usage and restored the colors of the books and comics to closer resemble the originals.


ACTING SHERIFF
RED RYDER


ACTING SHERIFF
RED RYDER



STEP 5

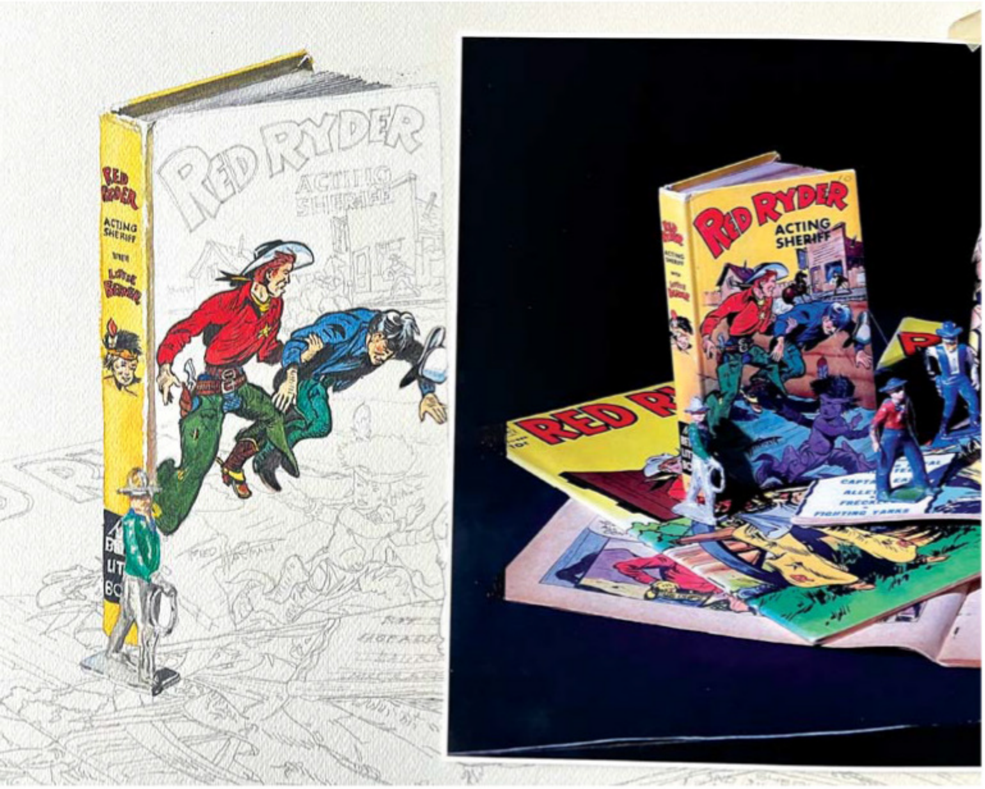
I used a two-layered approach for the background (opposite, top) for a few reasons. First, the underlayer seals the paper and helps me see if there are any flaws, such as pinpoints, where the sizing of the paper isn't completely filled in the smallest indentations in the surface. Second, because this is transparent watercolor, the light could pass through the final black background and the underpainting, hit the white of the paper and reflect the light from the paper to the viewer's eye through the underlayer. The underlayer essentially acts as a color the viewer "feels," but doesn't instantly realize they're seeing. By taking this approach, I knew I could warm up or cool down the painting as needed. In this case, because of the lively colors in the painting, I chose Aussie gold as the underlayer to increase the liveliness of the colors in the objects.

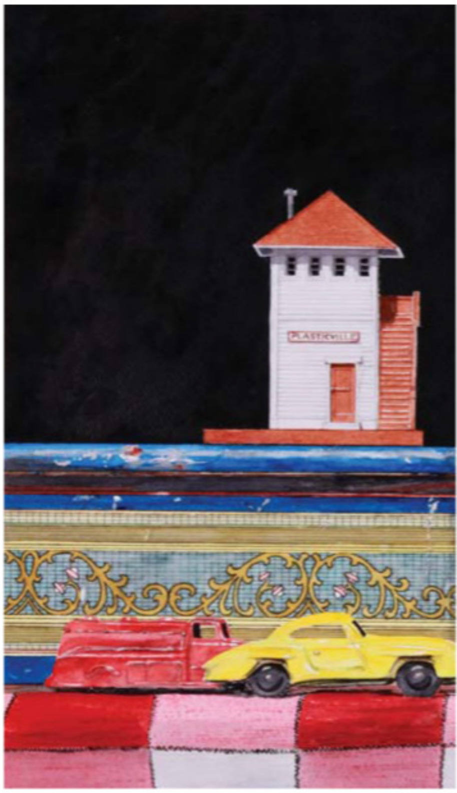
STEP 6

The final coat of paint applied to the background (opposite, bottom) is McCracken black. It's a transparent black, so the underpainting works well. When the paint is applied correctly, it creates a dark, soft-matte black surface that doesn't reflect light. This makes the background appear quite dark—and makes the objects in the still life stand out. (See Tip 3: Stepping Up to the Matte, page 71, for application details.)

FINAL STEP

The title, *Count Me In, Red Ryder* (watercolor on paper, 18x28), is adapted from the final voice balloon of the comic book in the lower right-hand corner. In the spirit that painting should always be fun, I've added my name as a whimsical touch in the scene. Can you find it? (Hint: Red Ryder "stands" firm when it comes to protecting others.)


RED RYDER
ACTING SHERIFF
RED RYDER
ACTING SHERIFF

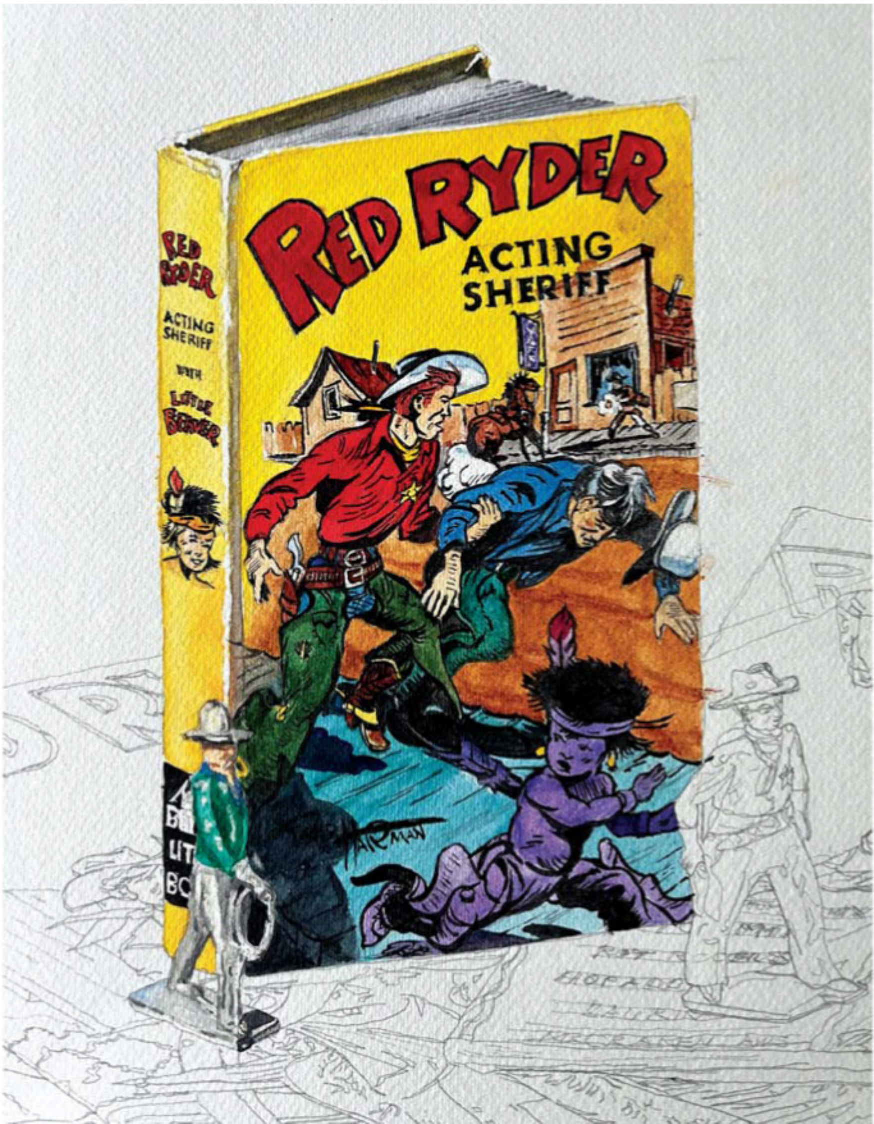

PLASTICVILLE

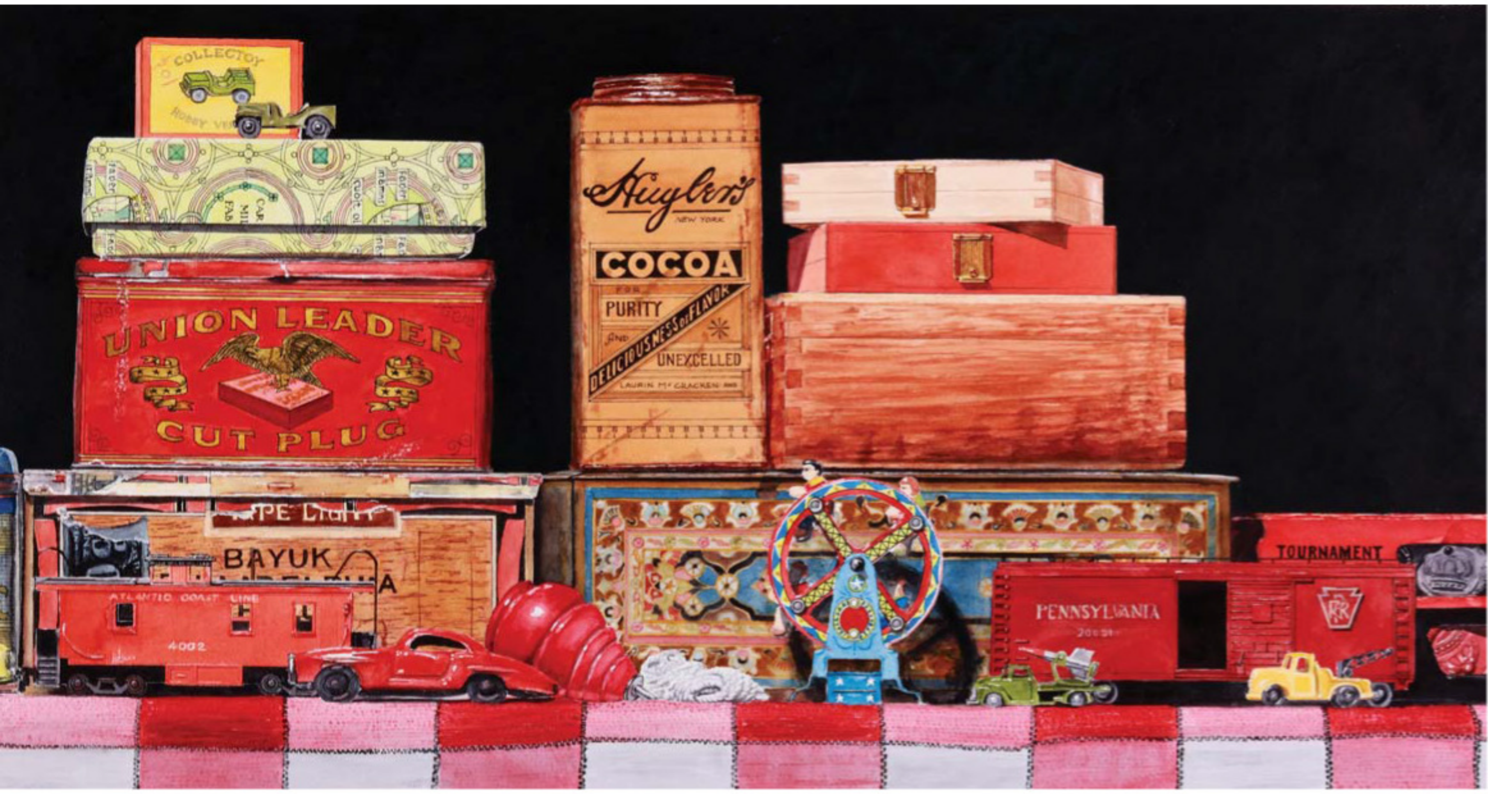
TIP 1: GETTING DETAILED

One of the cornerstones of creating realism is the ability to *see* the details. After all, if you can't see them, you can't paint them. For this painting, I cut the reference print into smaller pieces (above) so I could place the respective portion next to the area I was painting. I also kept the physical objects from the setup nearby so I could examine them more closely.

TIP 2: MASKING MASTERFULLY

Before I began painting the still life, I covered the entire surface with Duck's EasyLiner clear plastic. The plastic clings to the paper and prevents the paint from bleeding. I then cut out each area before I began working on it. This protects the rest of the painting from spills and splashes, and it forces me to concentrate on just the area I'm painting. I never adhere the plastic covering over an area that has already been painted. Why? The paint molecules are larger than the plastic's glue molecules, which will cause the paint to bleed.


RED RYDER
ACTING SHERIFF
RED RYDER
ACTING SHERIFF



ABOVE
Toys, Tins and Boxes (watercolor on paper, 16x40)

TIP 3: STEPPING UP TO THE MATTE

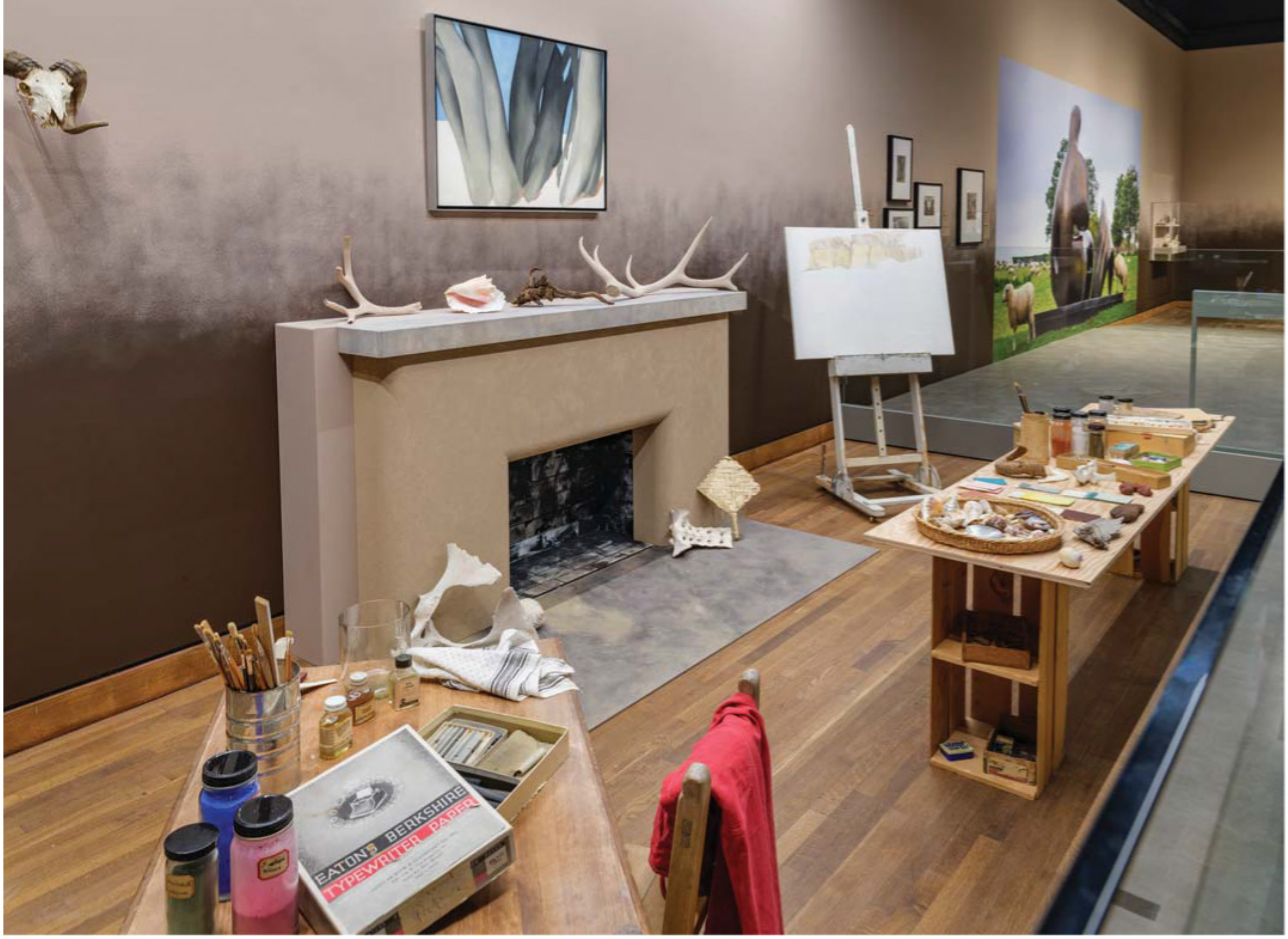
The paint color McCracken black is the result of an invitation from John Cogley, owner of Daniel Smith Inc., to work with the company's scientists to develop a deep black that I could use for backgrounds and other applications. When working with this color, I find that I need to add just a tiny amount of water—just enough to give it a yogurt-like consistency—to prep it for use. If the paint is too thin, the brushstrokes will show on the painting surface. Likewise, if the paint is too thick, the paint won't spread properly.

Next, I apply the paint to the paper—just enough for it to spread easily. Using an old, but soft, brush past its prime, I make a scumbling motion—moving the brush in all directions at the same time—to apply the paint so the brushstrokes won't show. I paint one small section at a time, moving around the paper in one continuous wash. This application breaks up the surface of the paint and gives it a velvet-like texture. The fine, rough surface absorbs the light instead of reflecting it, which creates a dark, soft-matte finish.

MEET THE ARTIST

Laurin McCracken is an award-winning watercolorist whose work is largely influenced by the Dutch and Flemish still life painters of the 16th and 17th centuries. He's a Signature Member of more than a dozen watercolor societies, including the American Watercolor Society, National Watercolor Society, Transparent Watercolor Society of America, Southern Watercolor Society, Watercolor West and Watercolor USA Honor Society. He's also an Elected Member of the Allied Artists of America in its watermedia category. His paintings are included in the permanent collections of the National Museum of China; the Asia Watercolor Art Museum, in Haikou, Hainan Province, China; and the Paper and Watermark Museum, in Fabriano, Italy. He's available for commissioned paintings of personal collections at laurinmc@aol.com.

VISIT MCCRACKEN'S WEBSITE AT LAURINGALLERY.COM.



EXHIBITION GEORGIA O'KEEFFE AND HENRY MOORE: GIANTS OF MODERN ART AT THE MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS.
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WHERE THE MAGIC HAPPENS

A fascination with artists' studios isn't new, but lately, curators have been indulging that curiosity with museum exhibitions that feature not only a display of artwork, but also an artist's tools, materials and significant objects—even portions of the physical workspace—offering greater insight into the creative process.

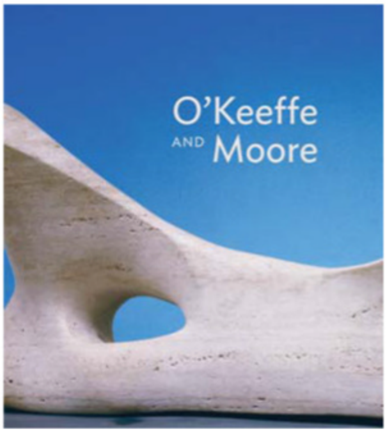
By Cynthia Close

For many artists, the studio is a place of sanctuary. Often shrouded in mystery, these spaces—which offer a safe place for exploration and experimentation—become shaped by the artists who occupy them. The location and size; the amount and direction of light; the tools and materials; the surrounding objects and personal effects—these are things that may never be seen by or known to the public, but they're among the many ingredients that play a role in inspiration.

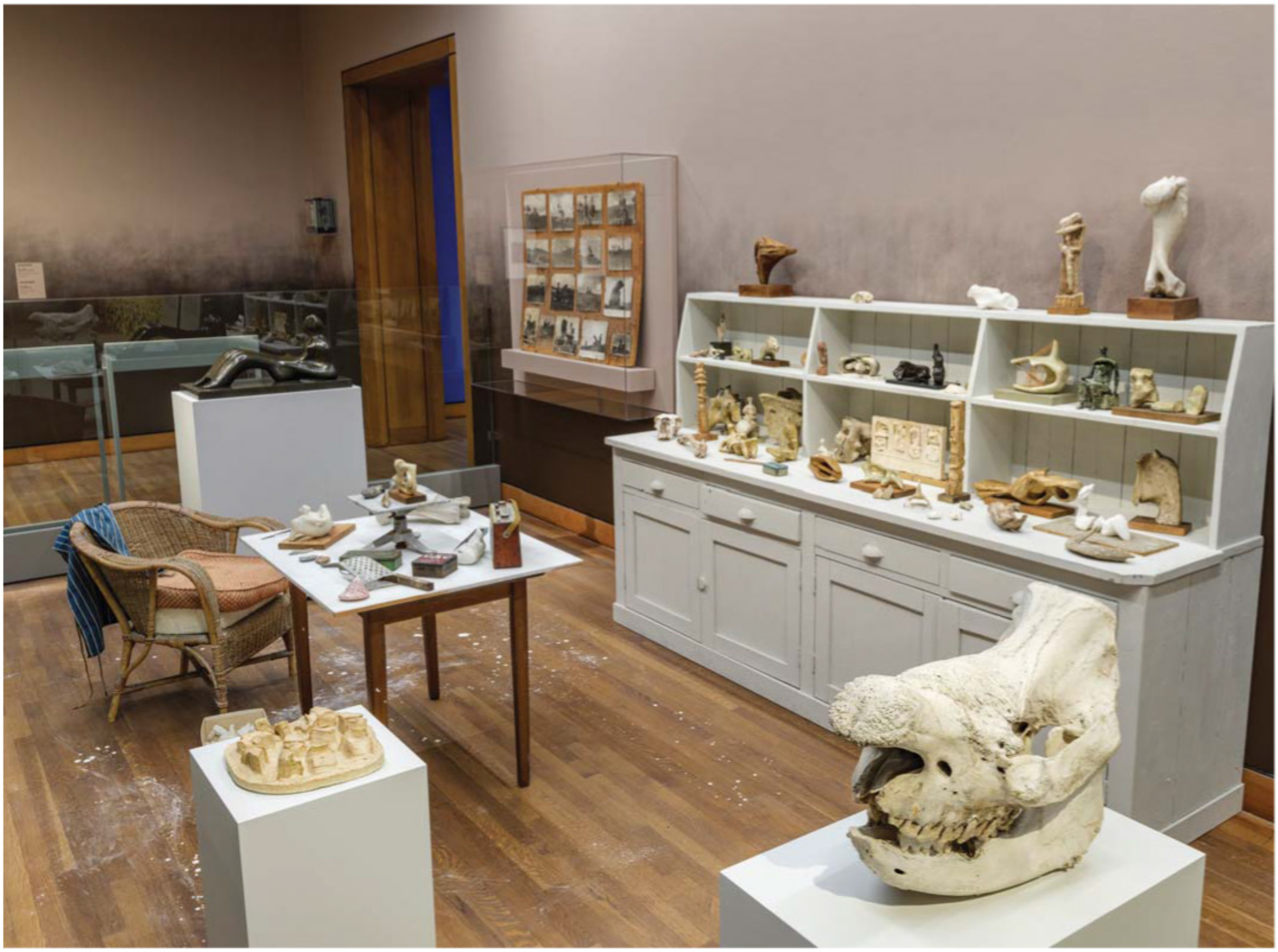
All around the world, there are historic sites that offer public access to the homes, studios and settings that were significant to the lives of artistic luminaries. Visiting these places feels akin to pulling back the curtain in *The Wizard of Oz*, evoking a sense of awe, surprise or revelation.

Picking up on the public's interest in going behind the scene, more and more museum curators have started enhancing exhibitions by including elements from the artist's work environment.

Long before it was a curatorial trend, the significance of an artist's studio was made clear by many famous examples of artists who turned their creative attention to the workspace as a subject worthy of painting. Here, we'll explore the artist's studio as subject, as sanctuary and as an exciting playground for the imagination.



OPPOSITE and BELOW
An exhibition on Georgia O'Keeffe and Henry Moore featured materials and objects from their studios, offering a glimpse into their creative processes.



EXHIBITION GEORGIA O'KEEFFE AND HENRY MOORE: GIANTS OF MODERN ART AT THE MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS. ARTISTS REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION OF THE HENRY MOORE FOUNDATION. PHOTO MMFA, DENIS FARLEY

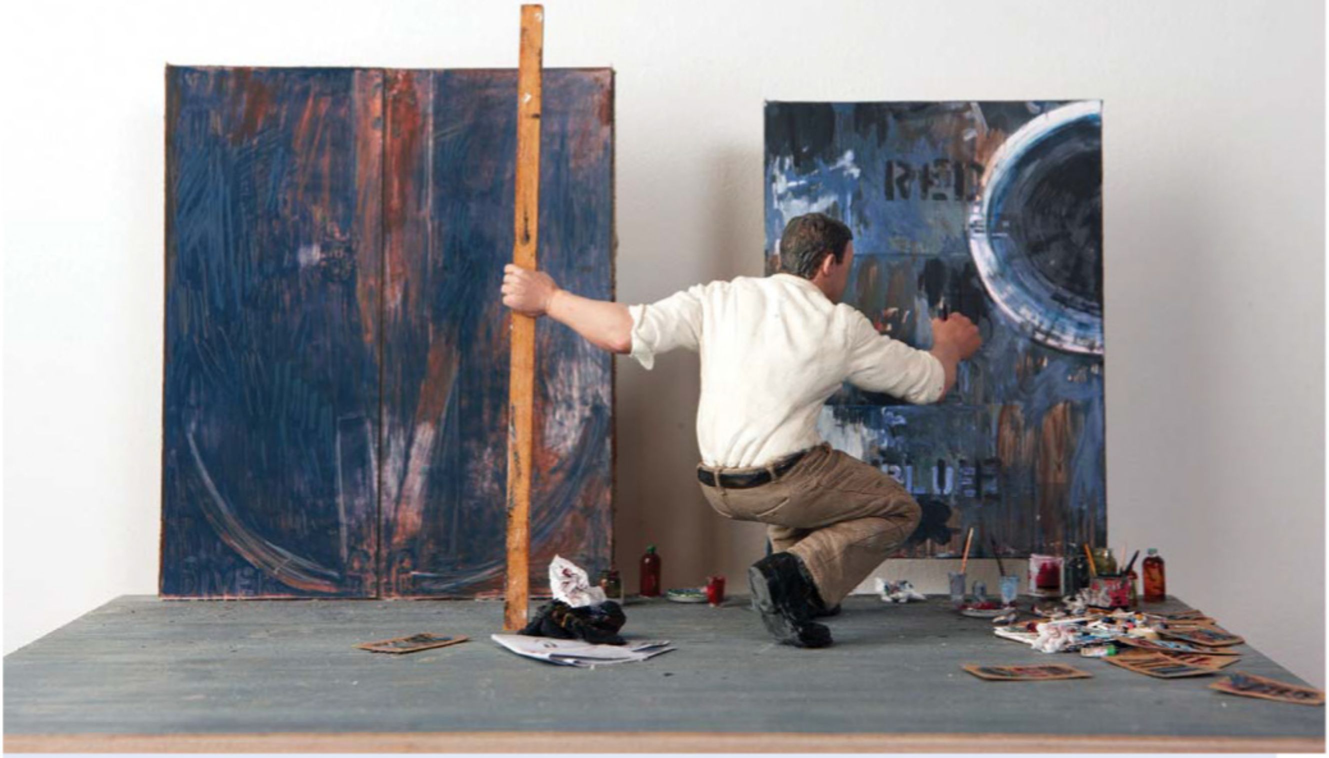
PAINTINGS, SCULPTURES AND SKULLS

One recent example of this curatorial trend is "O'Keeffe and Moore: Giants of Modern Art," a show organized by the San Diego Museum of Art in collaboration with Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. The show features meticulous recreations of the studios of Henry Moore (English, 1898–1986) and Georgia O'Keeffe (American, 1887–1986), along with examples of major works that trace their careers. Visitors are treated to up-close views of original contents taken from O'Keeffe's Ghost Ranch studio, in the hills of New Mexico, and Moore's Bourn Maquette Studio, in Perry Green, a small hamlet in Hertfordshire, England.

Moore referred to the collection of objects in his studio as his "library of natural forms." Among the items are locally scavenged cow and sheep bones, the skull of a rhinoceros, a giraffe's neckbone and minke whale vertebra—rare finds given to him by his friend, zoologist Julian

The exhibition "O'Keeffe and Moore: Giants of Modern Art" celebrates the work and inspirations of these 20th-century art legends.

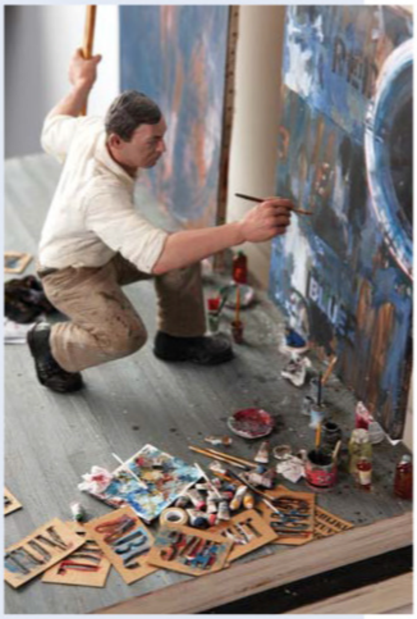
EXHIBITION GEORGIA O'KEEFFE AND HENRY MOORE: GIANTS OF MODERN ART AT THE MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS. © GEORGIA O'KEEFFE MUSEUM / ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK / CARCC OTTAWA 2024 | REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION OF THE HENRY MOORE FOUNDATION. PHOTO MMFA, DENIS FARLEY

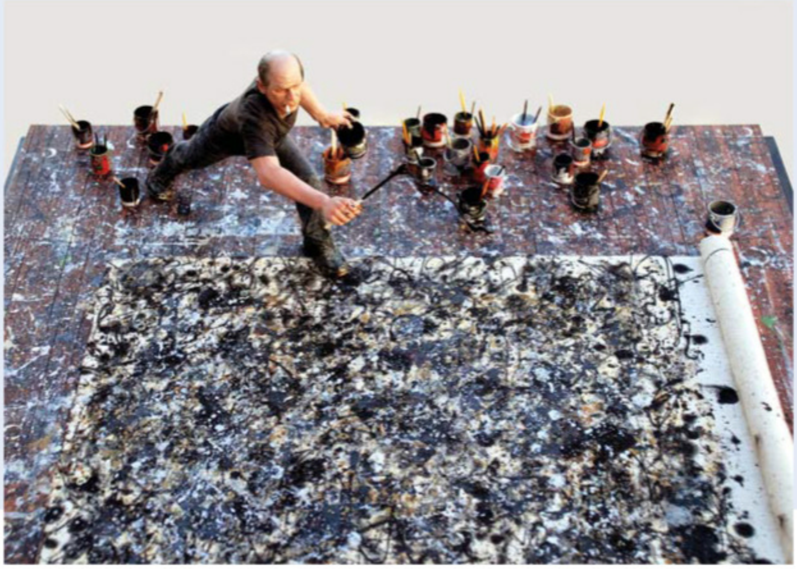


SMALL WONDERS

This fascination with the artist's studio as a source of creative inspiration continues unabated in the 21st century. "Small Worlds," an exhibition in 2019 at the Fleming Museum of Art, at the University of Vermont, featured the mixed-media works of Joe Fig, a contemporary artist, educator and author known for work that explores the creative process and the spaces where art is made. His series of miniature three-dimensional works, made between 2000 and 2019, meticulously recreates scenes of artists in their studios. Fig lavishes attention on every detail to make his Lilliputian scenes as lifelike as possible.

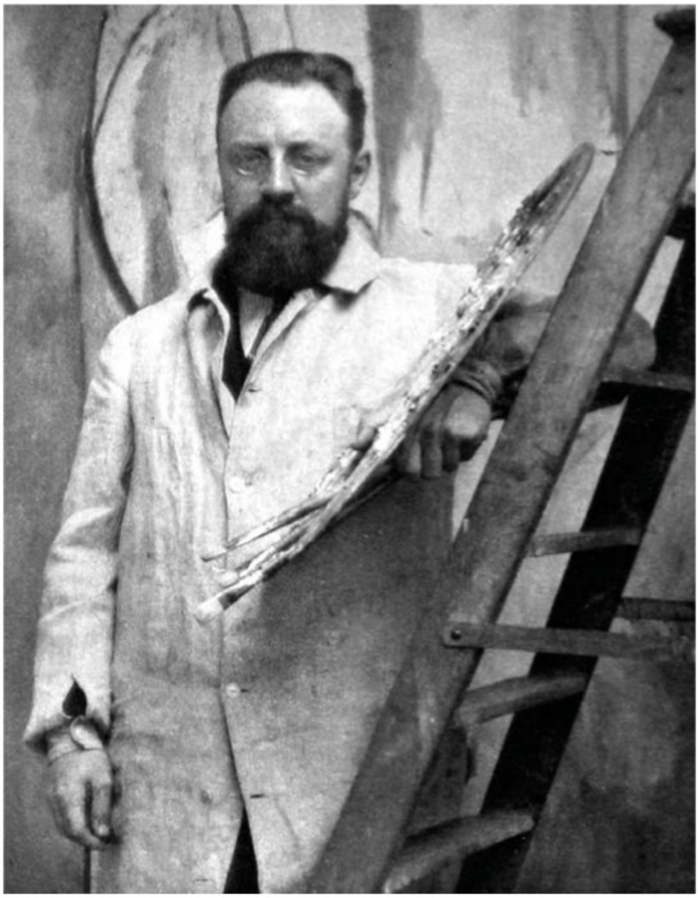
Fig is the department chair of the Fine Arts and Visual Studies programs at Ringling College of Art and Design, in Sarasota, Fla. His work has been exhibited in more than 30 solo and 50 group exhibitions. His recent paintings that celebrate the museum experience are featured in "Contemplating Vermeer," an exhibition at the Sarasota Museum, on view through April 13. (See Picture This, page 88, for a featured work.)

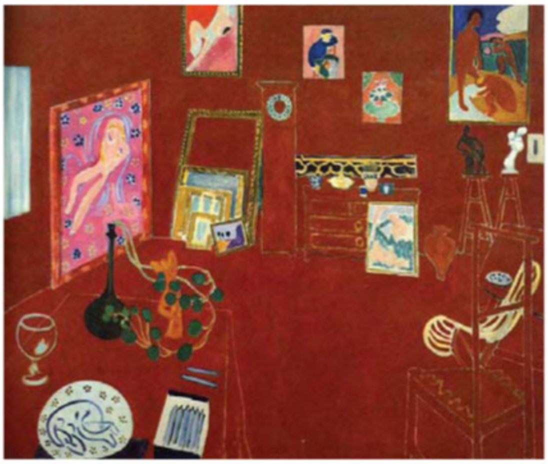




TOP
Fig's mixed-media sculpture (10x17x12) and detail (above) of artist **Jasper Johns** (American; born 1930) captures the artist in the act of creation.

LEFT
In **Pollock** (8x21x17½), Fig's depiction of Abstract Expressionist Jackson Pollock (American, 1912–56) highlights the physicality of the artist's process.





LEFT
Photogravure of the artist Henri Matisse, in Paris, on May 13, 1913, by Alvin Langdon Coburn
COURTESY OF WIKIPEDIA

ABOVE
The Red Studio
(1911; oil on canvas, 71¼x86¼) by Henri Matisse
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK CITY

OPPOSITE
Still Life with Dance
(1909; oil on canvas, 35¼x46¼) by Henri Matisse
HERMITAGE MUSEUM, SAINT PETERSBURG

Huxley. Seeing such items alongside the art they inspired makes for a more immersive museum-going experience. The exhibition traveled to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA Boston), in October, and remains on view through January 20.

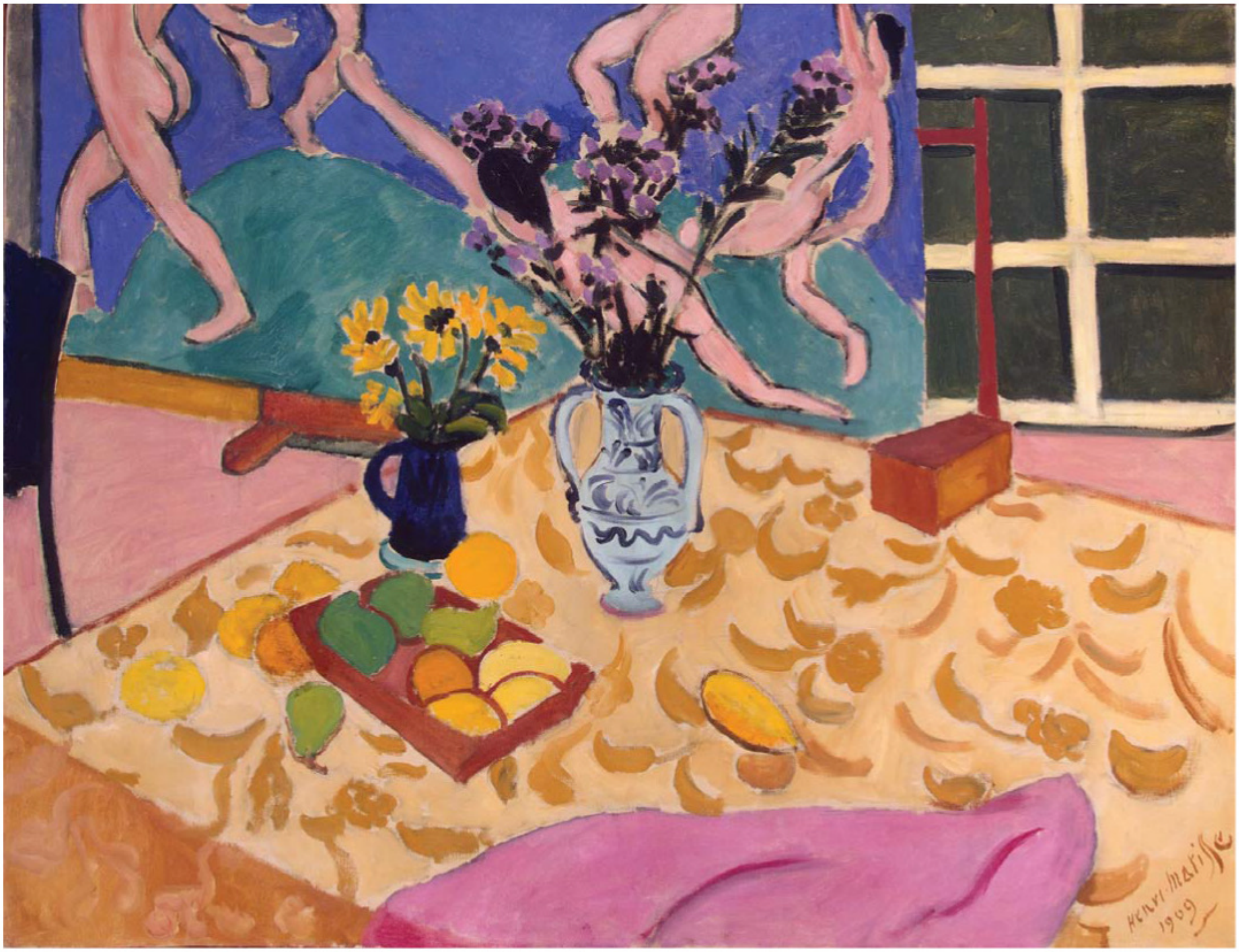
MATISSE IN THE STUDIO

The Red Studio, a 1911 painting by Henri Matisse (French, 1869–1954), was the focus of an exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), in New York City, in 2022. The painting, which is part of the museum's permanent collection, is considered one of the most influential works in the history of modern art.

In the exhibition, displayed alongside the titular work, were the six surviving paintings, three sculptures and one ceramic work depicted by Matisse within the painting. "Now over 110 years old, *The Red Studio* is both a landmark within the centuries-long tradition of studio paintings and a foundational work of modern art," says Ann Temkin, MoMA's chief curator. "The picture remains a touchstone for any artist taking on the task of portraying their studio."

In the spring of 2024, the Paris-based Fondation Louis Vuitton presented "Matisse, The Red Studio," bringing the popular exhibition to the City of Lights in the lead-up to the Paris Olympics. Further back, in 2017, MFA Boston published *Matisse in the Studio*, which functioned as a catalog for its exhibition of the same name. The richly illustrated book investigates the role objects played in the artist's studio practice. One can find the same small blue pitcher and painted vase, for instance, in many of Matisse's still-life paintings, such as *Still Life with Dance* (1909), which—like *The Red Studio*—also includes a painting within a painting. One of the artist's greatest masterpieces, *The Dance*, from the same year, is seen leaning at an angle against the wall in the background.

The book, which is available on Amazon, presents Matisse's objects like actors on a stage and includes photographs of the artist at work in the various studios he occupied throughout his career.



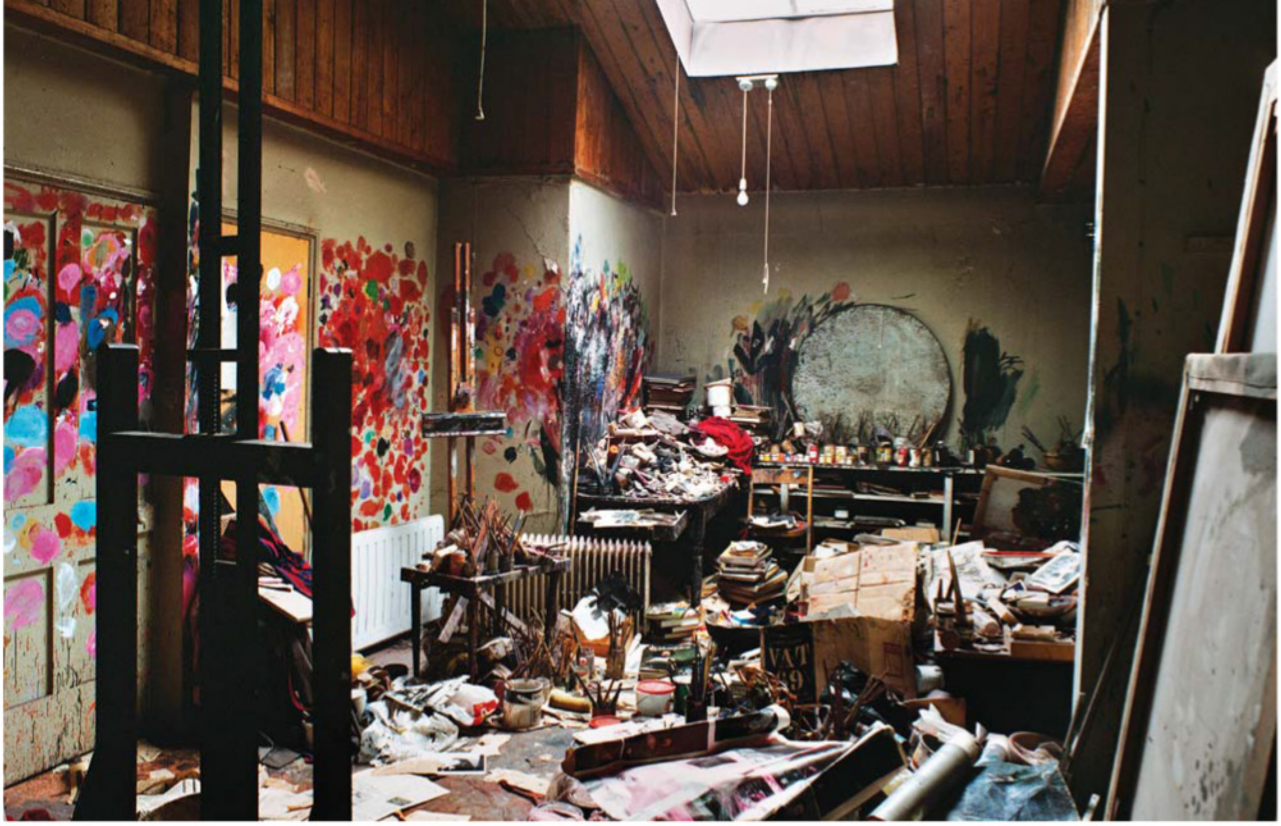
THIS SPACE OF MINE

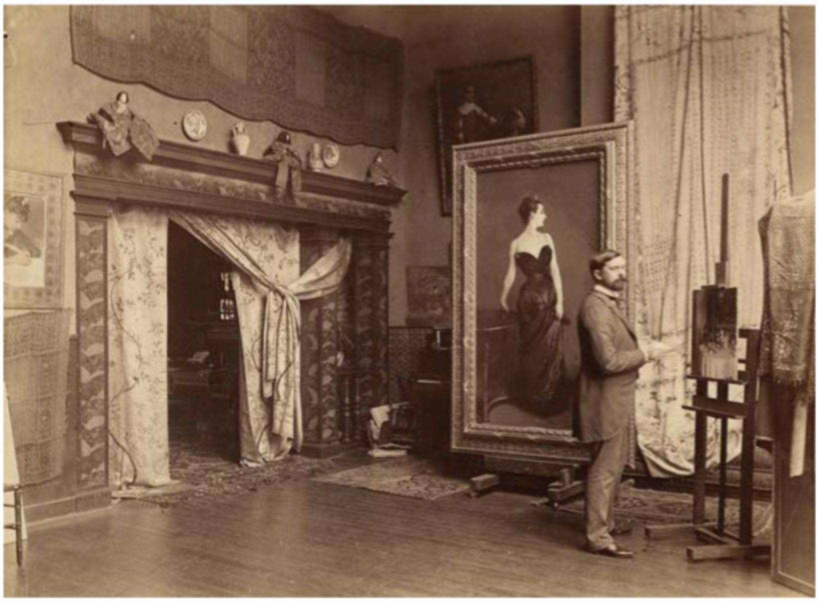
Perhaps it was the COVID-induced confinement of 2020 and 2021 that stimulated the curatorial trend to focus on the intimacy and isolation of the studio as an exhibition theme. In 2022, London's Whitechapel Gallery featured over 100 works by more than 80 artists from every continent in its show, "A Century of the Artist's Studio: 1920–2020." Like the O'Keeffe/Moore exhibition, the curators included a series of "studio corners"—recreations of the physical environments in which the art was made. In conjunction with the exhibition, Whitechapel published "This Space of Mine," a video blog series featuring artists on the role of the studio in inspiration.

Among the featured artists was British sculptor Antony Gormley (born 1950), who stated: "The studio is the garden out of which things grow … I want to create the conditions out of which art can arise." A video, "This Space of Mine … With Antony Gormley," and other videos from the series are available to view on YouTube.

Artists' studios are as varied and complex, of course, as the work of the artists who occupy them. Gormley's spacious, light-filled, organized, glistening white space, for example, is the polar opposite of the utter chaos in the studio of painter Francis Bacon (1909–92).

Bacon is usually identified with London, where he lived and worked most of his life, but in 1998, the Hugh Lane Gallery, in Ireland, the country of his birth, secured the donation of his studio contents from the artist's heir, John Edwards, and Brian Clarke, the estate executor. After a team of archaeologists cataloged every piece of detritus, the contents of the studio were relocated from 7 Reece Mews, London, to Dublin, where they remain on permanent display at Hugh Lane Gallery—now one of the city's top tourist attractions. The gallery's director, Barbara Dawson, has described the studio as "a strange sort of laboratory" containing "compost heaps of imagery."





ABOVE
This photo of Francis Bacon's studio was taken by Peter Ogden, in 1998, after Bacon's death and before the studio was moved to the Hugh Lane Gallery, in Dublin.

LEFT
The photo, **John Singer Sargent in his studio, with Portrait of Madame X** (ca 1885), by Adolphe Giraudon, provides a glimpse of studio life 150 years ago, in the Victorian Era.

IN VICTORIAN FASHION

An 1885 photograph of American painter John Singer Sargent (1856–1925), posed in his studio with his famous *Portrait of Madame X*, offers insight into the creative life of the Victorian Era artist, considered to be one of the greatest portrait painters of all time. Sargent is standing next to an easel, wearing a white-collared shirt and formal waistcoat—rather formal attire for someone engaged in the act of painting. The high ceilings, drapery and polished floors—without so much as a drop of paint—suggest the setup is less a look at reality and more of a marketing tool in response to the artist's controversial portrait. The subject's bare shoulders and the expanse of lily-white flesh was considered scandalous at the time, but Sargent didn't shy away from the uproar. Instead, the painting takes center stage in this photo—a symbol of its importance to the artist.

In 2023, MFA Boston mounted the exhibition, "Fashioned by Sargent." This was not a presentation of the artist's studio effects, but rather an examination of the elegant gowns, robes, hats and other accessories worn by the subjects of his paintings. Sargent himself often supplied the garments for his sitters, choosing the items for their color, texture and contribution to the composition of his works. This innovative use of costume was central to his artwork.

The MFA Boston curators included the original outfits, displayed in glass cases on mannequins, next to the portrait in which they appear. Many of Sargent's commissioned portraits were painted in his studio, and we can spot in several paintings certain textiles and pieces of furniture that the artist kept in his studio as ready props.

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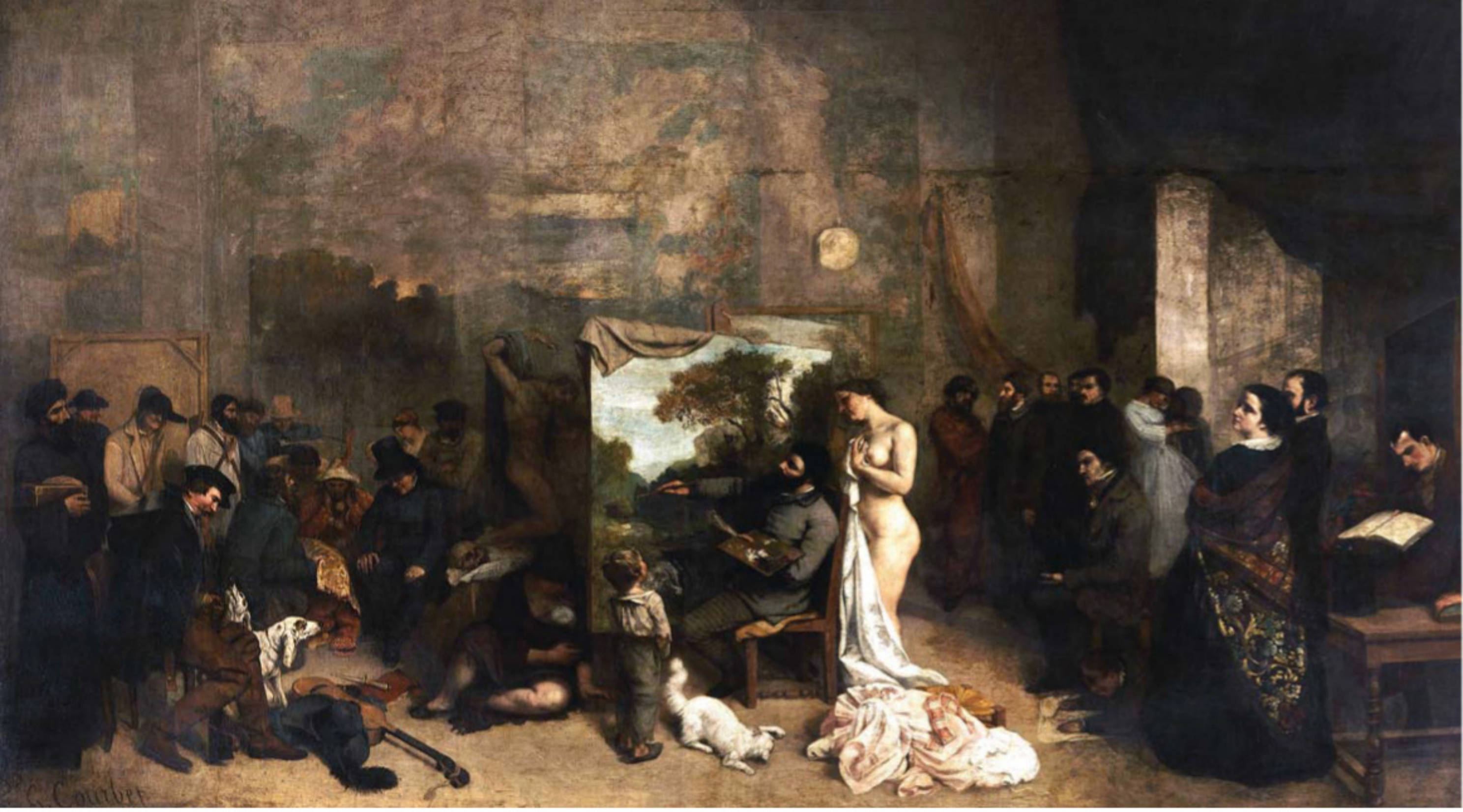
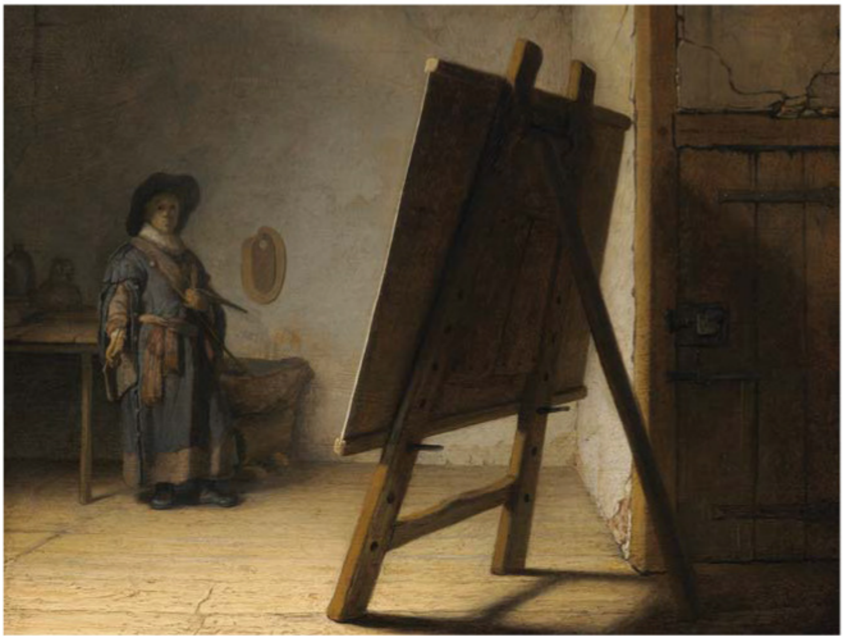


ABOVE
The Painter's Studio: A Real Allegory Summing Up Seven Years of My Artistic and Moral Life
(1855; oil on canvas, 11⅘x19½ feet)
by Gustave Courbet
MUSÉE D'ORSAY, PARIS



RIGHT
The Artist in His Studio
(ca 1626; oil on panel, 9¾x12⅖)
by Rembrandt van Rijn
MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

STUDIO AS SUBJECT

Artists using the studio as subject matter is a centuries-old tradition. There's the 1628 painting, *The Artist in His Studio*, by Rembrandt (Dutch; 1606–69), which measures just under 10x13 inches but feels monumental. The small oil features a larger-than-life-sized canvas on an easel with the backside facing the viewer. The artist stands shrouded in shadow in a corner of the spare studio. He faces the canvas, but we cannot see what he sees. The image effectively captures the mystery and daunting challenge of the creative process.

At nearly 12x20 feet, *The Painter's Studio: A Real Allegory Summing Up Seven Years of My Artistic and Moral Life*, by Realist painter Gustave Courbet (French, 1819–77) stands in sharp contrast to Rembrandt's modest workspace depiction. In Courbet's version, the studio is a huge stage jam-packed with models, friends and elite members of Parisian society. The artist is seated in the center, his back toward a voluptuous nude, painting a landscape, while a child observes, and a dog plays at his feet. The painting is intentionally rich with allegorical meaning. Not known for modesty, Courbet once said, "The world comes to be painted at my studio."

The world still loves an invitation to step inside an artist's workspace—to get a "peek behind the curtain" and a chance to perhaps, just maybe, unlock a few art-making secrets.

Cynthia Close (cynthiaclose.com) earned an M.F.A. from Boston University and worked in art-related roles before becoming a writer/editor.

art news

Keeping you in the know

BY CYNTHIA CLOSE

U.S.-Based Research Center to Focus on Goya

A new research center focused on the late 18th-century Spanish artist Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes (1746–1828) was recently announced by The Hispanic Society Museum & Library (HSM&L), in New York City. The Goya Research Center is led by Director & CEO Guillaume Kientz—a Goya scholar and former curator of Spanish and Latin American art at the Musée du Louvre, in Paris.

Announcing this new venture, Kientz stated, "The Goya Research Center at HSM&L will serve as a beacon for scholars, artists and enthusiasts alike, illuminating the genius of Francisco Goya and his enduring impact on art and culture. Through our preservation efforts and commitment to fostering research, we aim to deepen understanding and appreciation of Goya's legacy."

ABOUT THE CENTER

Goya's visibility and presence in the greatest museum collections worldwide has earned him iconic status and one-word name recognition among other art-world giants such as Rembrandt and Picasso. Given this, it's surprising to learn that research on Goya in the United States is thin. The New York City-based center is being built on the firm foundation started in Spain at the Museo del Prado, in Madrid, and at the Fundación Goya en Aragón, in Zaragoza, and includes additional work established primarily by Kientz at the Musée du Louvre.

The center's main objectives in the coming years are:

- **Study:** Leading in-depth research on art history, provenance and technical analysis, with a first-phase focus on New York-based collections.
- **Promotion:** Increasing awareness and appreciation for Goya's works in the United States through programs and exhibitions.
- **Publication:** Producing physical and online publications to share findings and insights.
- **Fostering Investigations:** Encouraging further scholarly research on the artist through a fellowship program and an annual symposium.

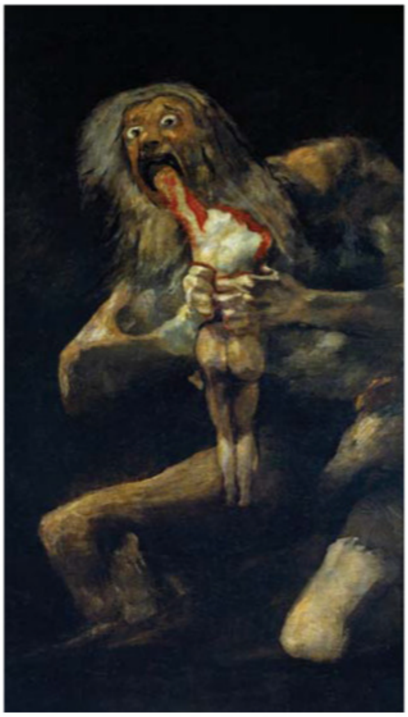
Perhaps one of the most useful tools being created by the center is a digital repository of Goya pieces held by the Hispanic Society. HSM&L's holdings include more than 800 Goya prints, as well as four paintings and 13 drawings. Several works in the collection are by the artist's entourage and followers. The virtual repository will also include Goya works held by partner museums in New York and beyond.

ABOUT GOYA

Goya went beyond his early, rather mundane, art training to become court painter to Charles IV, in 1789. His many commissioned portraits of royals and elites were often unflattering and include the 1801 large-group portrait, *Charles IV of Spain and His Family*. This was thought to be an intentional mockery of the pretentions of the monarchy as well as other rich and famous elites of the time.

There are certain singular works that have risen in fame to represent the artist's entire career. One of those, known as the *Naked Maja* (1790–1800) was called "lascivious" when it was first shown. It caused such a ruckus that Goya painted a second version, *Maja Vestida* (1800–05), or *Dressed Maja*.

Goya was known for exploring some of the darkest sides of human experience in works like the 1794 painting, *Yard with Lunatics*. His jaded view of the human condition motivated the creation of *Los Caprichos*, a series of 80 etchings and aquatints published in 1799. Goya also cataloged the horrors of war in paintings like *The Third of May 1808*. This visual drama resonates with the violent images of war we can access through contemporary media.



Saturn Devouring His Son (from "The Black Paintings," ca 1820–23; mixed technique on wall and canvas, 57½x32½) by Francisco Goya

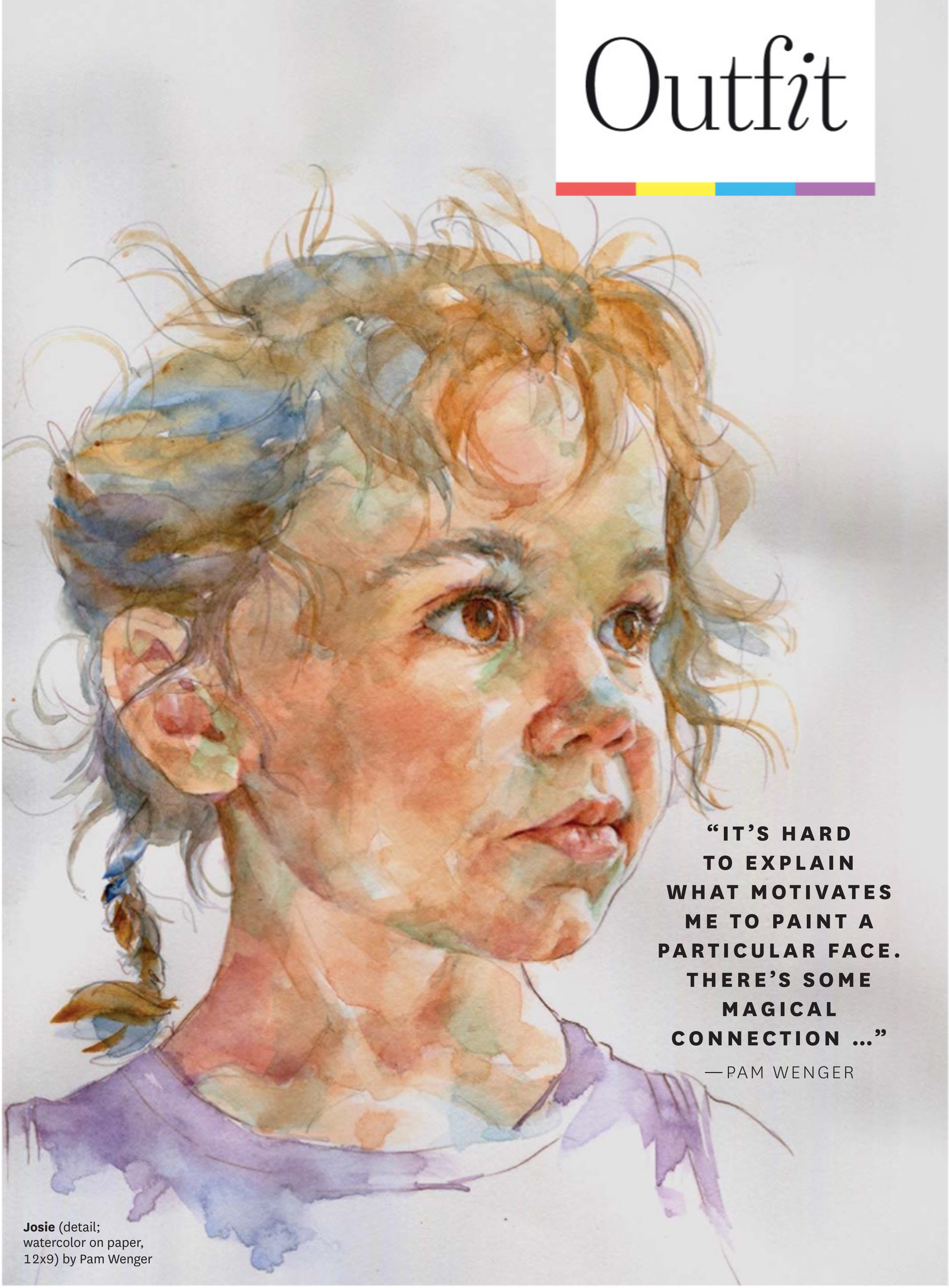
MUSEO DEL PRADO, P000763

At the end of his life, Goya descended into isolation, ill health and eventual madness. *The Black Paintings*, executed directly on the walls of his home between 1819–23, are some of the most shocking images ever painted by an artist. They were eventually removed from the walls and transferred to canvas, but they've suffered serious alteration via restoration attempts.

The Goya Research Center anticipates the 200th anniversary of the artist's death, in 2028, giving its founders time to realize their vision.

▶ LEARN MORE ABOUT THE RESEARCH CENTER AT HISPANICSOCIETY.ORG/PROGRAMS/GOYA-RESEARCH-CENTER.

Outfit



"IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN WHAT MOTIVATES ME TO PAINT A PARTICULAR FACE. THERE'S SOME MAGICAL CONNECTION …"

—PAM WENGER

Josie (detail; watercolor on paper, 12x9) by Pam Wenger

The Value (and Cost) of Dual Degrees

Professors and students weigh the pros and cons of pursuing a dual degree.

By Daniel Grant

Like quite a few teens planning to go to college, Jacob Saphier couldn’t make up his mind about which subject would be his major course of study. Torn between pursing a degree in engineering or enrolling in art school, in the end, he decided to do both, completing a five-year, dual-degree program at the University of Michigan, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering from the College of Engineering and a bachelor’s in fine art from the Stamps School of Art & Design, in 2016.

That’s nothing out of the ordinary for the Stamps School, where between 10 and 15 percent of students in any given art class are participating in a dual-degree program of some kind. Besides engineering, there are dual-degree students at the university pursuing second degrees in literature, science, music, theatre, business, architecture, nursing and education.

According to a 2020 survey by *The Princeton Review* of 770 colleges across the country, a growing number of academic institutions offer dual-degree (or combination-degree) programs for students with more than one area of interest. The survey found that 34 percent of institutions of higher learning had dual-degree programs—up from 29 percent from the publication’s 2012 survey. The surveys didn’t collect data on the employment or salary earnings of students who earn dual degrees, but Robert Franek, *The Princeton Review’s* editor-in-chief, remarked that these programs “give students opportunities to take advantage of a school’s unique offerings, gain experience in related fields, and graduate with wider windows for employment and income alike.”

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

There are times when having two sets of demonstrable skills may lead to a higher-paying first job. Saphier notes that his first job after graduating from the University of Michigan was working as an engineer/designer at Chrysler. “The team lead who hired me noticed I had a design degree as well as an engineering degree, so he reached out to me,” says Saphier. “The job wasn’t as ‘entry level’ as someone with only a mechanical engineering degree would have gotten—and the salary was somewhat higher, too.”

Still, according to Richard N. Pitt, an associate professor of sociology at Vanderbilt University, who has studied educational attainment and post-graduation outcomes: “Given how much a fifth year of college costs, there’s no way that an additional year’s investment of tuition and lost income is compensated for—at least in terms of the types of jobs graduates are able to get those first few years out of college.” His research has found, however, that having two or more distinct skill sets can have an effect on breadth and depth of income, although those effects aren’t usually seen until four or five years post graduation.

Beyond a potentially higher salary, dual-degrees do afford students options that, perhaps, other single-degree graduates may not have. Marguerite Ramm—a 2014 University of Michigan graduate who holds bachelor’s degrees in fine art, and the environment and natural resources—chose to focus on the art side. She went on to earn a master’s in fine art with a concentration in comic book illustration from the California College of the Arts, in 2017, and currently teaches elementary school students in the Bay Area how to make their own comic books.

Alexa Minc, on the other hand—who earned a bachelor’s degree in jewelry and metal-smithing from the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and a bachelor’s in human biology from Brown University—followed her science inclinations and went on to enroll in medical school at the University of Michigan, eventually becoming a faculty member in internal medicine and pediatrics. “I got into RISD first,” she says, noting that what had really attracted her to Brown was its proximity to the prestigious art college.

Minc, who really loved science and searched for liberal arts colleges that had studio art departments, noted that her parents were “not

> “These programs answer the tacit questions: How do you get smart kids to attend art school? And how do you get parents to pay for their smart kids to attend art school?”

ADOBE STOCK

enthusiastic” about her going to art school. “They feared I’d earn a degree that wouldn’t lead to a job, but the dual-degree program between Brown and RISD helped make them more amenable to the idea of me majoring in art.” These programs answer the tacit questions: How do you get smart kids to attend art school? And how do you get parents to pay for their smart kids to attend art school?

FOOTING THE BILL

In addition to financial resources, an additional year of college requires inner resources. Ernesto Renda—who, in 2018, earned a bachelor’s degree in painting from RISD and a bachelor’s in modern culture and media from Brown University—says, “I often felt lonely in my fifth year, as all my best friends had graduated the year before.”

The tuition and living expenses of a year at Brown is estimated at $65,000, while a year at Tufts University, which operates a dual-degree program with the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, is $75,000. Renda noted that he was “lucky enough to have parents who could pay the full tuition,” and Saphier says much the same.

Perhaps affording an extra year of college may not be such a hardship for dual-degree students who, like many of those pursuing a double major, are “found more frequently among private schools than public,” says Steven J. Tepper, dean and director of Arizona State University’s Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts. “They skew by privilege,” he notes.

Tepper’s research looked more closely at double-majors than at combination-degree programs, finding that science majors who pursued a double major in the arts earned $7,000 more, on average, than those who only majored in science.

It’s worth noting that an extra year of college in order to complete a second undergraduate degree doesn’t affect a full-time student’s eligibility for a Pell Grant. The maximum for the 2024–25 school year is $7,395, and the college or university will receive half of the total in the fall and the other half in the spring for 12 terms of undergraduate eligibility—or up to six years. Some five-year dual-degree programs consist of a student earning first an undergraduate and then a graduate degree. Pell Grants do not cover graduate school, however.

AESTHETIC VALUE

There’s no hard evidence that those with two undergraduate degrees—one being in studio art—have any greater success in landing jobs, earning higher salaries or being admitted into graduate programs. Still, the achievement may be a largely aesthetic success, according to Wil Del Pilar, vice president of the Washington, D.C.-based The Education Trust, a nonprofit advocacy and research group. “There’s no additional value in having a second bachelor’s degree in the job market,” he says, “although it does provide interdisciplinary exposure, and employers look for that.”

The aesthetic side feels good, however. Kayana Thompson-Shaw, a color designer for Nike who graduated from the University of Michigan, in 2015, with bachelor’s degrees in fine art and sports management, says that having two undergraduate degrees “wasn’t a factor” in her being hired by Nike, although the skills she learned in both degree programs have helped her in her daily work. “My knowledge of design and color has come in handy,” she says, “and what I learned about speaking and writing in sports management has been very useful, because I’m presenting all the time.”

For her part, Minc claims that “having a really strong interest and passion in art was of interest to the admissions officers at my med school. We ended up talking about it a lot.”

Daniel Grant is an arts writer and the author of six books on building a successful art career, including The Business of Being an Artist.

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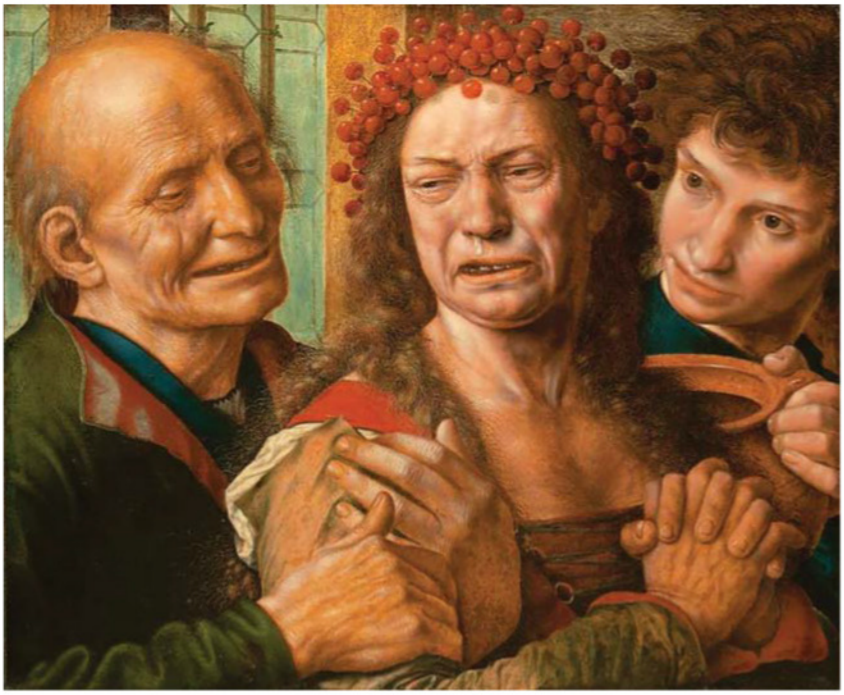
"Saints, Sinners, Lovers and Fools: 300 Years of Flemish Masterworks" is a unique presentation of medieval, Renaissance and Baroque paintings, sculptures, and other objects from the Southern Netherlands. Better known today as Flanders, this region was home to an array of visionary artists who explored new ways to depict reality, portray humanity and tell stories that continue to resonate with viewers today. Masterpieces on display include works by Jan van Hemessen, Peter Paul Rubens, Jacob Jordaens, Frans Snyders and Anthony van Dyck, among many others.

The exhibition, which runs through May 4 at the Peabody Essex Museum, in Salem, Mass., offers a look into the specific subjects and styles adopted by Flemish artists between the 15th and 17th centuries, providing important connections to the society and culture of the time. These works depict a fast-changing world through unique styles, subjects and techniques, offering insight into the past and the chance to create parallels with our world today. The collaboration between the Denver Art Museum and The Phoebus Foundation, in Antwerp, Belgium, introduces U.S. audiences to the Phoebus Foundation's comprehensive 15th-to-17th-century Flemish art collection for the first time.

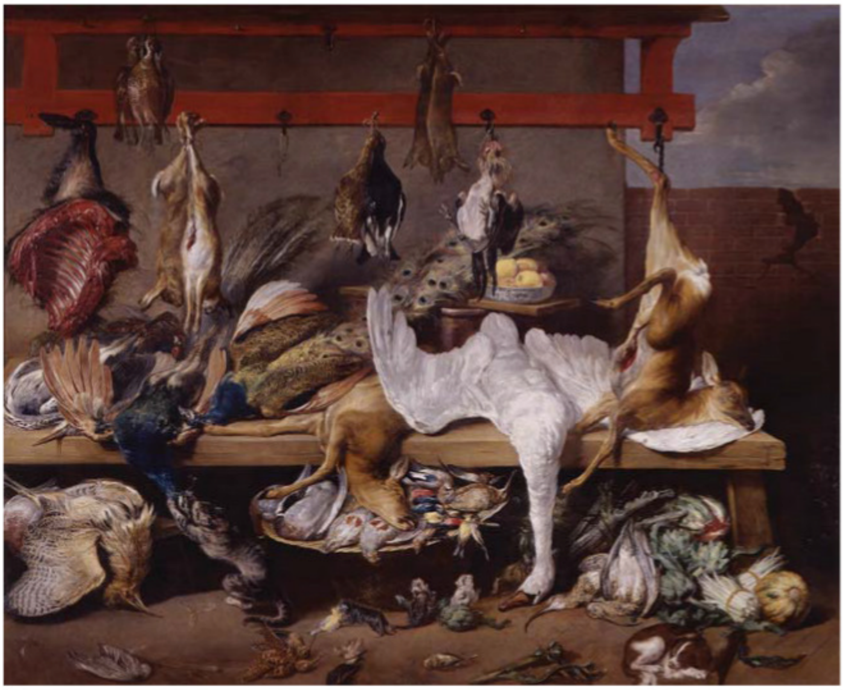


The Tearful Bride (1540; oil on panel, 20x25) by Jan van Hemessen

NATIONAL GALLERY, PRAGUE

A Game Stall (ca 1625–35; oil on canvas, 39x98½) by Frans Snyders

YORK ART GALLERY. R1784



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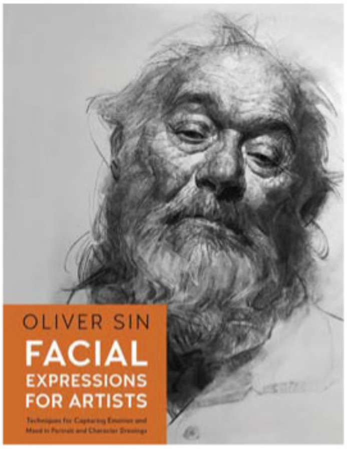
BY BETH WILLIAMS

ABOUT FACE



Breathe life into your portraiture with practical and inspiring help from ***Facial Expressions for Artists*** (Rockport Publishers; available December 31) by Oliver Sin. The celebrated portrait artist and instructor guides you on how to create expressive and distinctive emotions in your drawings, from subtle looks such as irritation to full-on expressions like exuberance. The book—Sin's second in the "For Artists" series—shows how skull and facial musculature translates into the planes of the face in works featuring models of various ages, facial types, and ethnic and racial backgrounds. Sin's work is on point for artists of all skill levels. (For more inspiration from the artist, see the "Lesson" column in the November/December 2024 issue of *Artists Magazine*.)

CLASS IS IN SESSION!

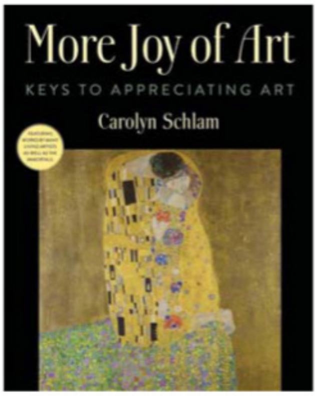
Portrait painting in watercolor can be daunting without a definitive process, but it doesn't have to be. Award-winning watercolorist Pam Wenger will share her process and encourage you to develop or fine-tune your own in Artists Network's Winter 2025 Artists Classroom @ Home series. Through four virtual classes, Wenger will demonstrate how to loosen up the portrait painting process to achieve a more relaxed look that fully embraces the spontaneity of the medium. She'll also address common painting challenges when creating watercolor portraits—and will show you how you can confidently overcome them by developing an essential skill set.

The online classes will be held live from 1 to 3 p.m. ET on January 11, January 25, February 8 and February 22. Classes are available on demand until 30 days after the last workshop. These virtual painting class experiences are customized for both experienced and novice levels, and you can be part of the entire journey or create your own a-la-carte schedule.

▶ **REGISTER ONLINE AT ARTISTSCLASSROOM.COM/ATHOME.**

MEET THE ARTIST

Award-winning artist Pam Wenger (pamwenger.com), who specializes in watercolor portraiture (see *Josie*, page 81), is a Signature Member of the American Watercolor Society, Transparent Watercolor Society, Baltimore Watercolor Society and Pennsylvania Watercolor Society. She also serves on the board of the Pennsylvania Watercolor Society and has won awards in many shows. She's an experienced former educator and has been hosting workshops in person and online since 2017.



Even More Joy

More Joy of Art: Keys to Appreciating Art (Skyhorse Publishing; available January 14) by author and award-winning artist Carolyn Schlam delves into how to decode visual art for greater understanding and perception. In this sequel to *The Joy of Art: How to Look At, Appreciate, and Talk About Art*, Schlam provides a definitive framework from which to examine works of historical and contemporary art from any period, style, medium or genre. Through a guided visual tour, she explores the characteristics of beauty, authenticity, originality, perspective and essence, among others, which is intended to encourage a more appreciative—and decidedly more complex—artistic palate.

WORKSHOPS 2025

Your Complete Guide to Workshops Here and Abroad

Artists never stop learning. Each new painting or drawing can bring another revelation, but when you want to learn more about a specific technique, medium or style, you can't do better than to take a workshop. Start planning now. Check out the following listings for one or many workshops just right for you.

Need to promote your event, artwork, or online presence?

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Stephanie Rubin
to see how she can help!

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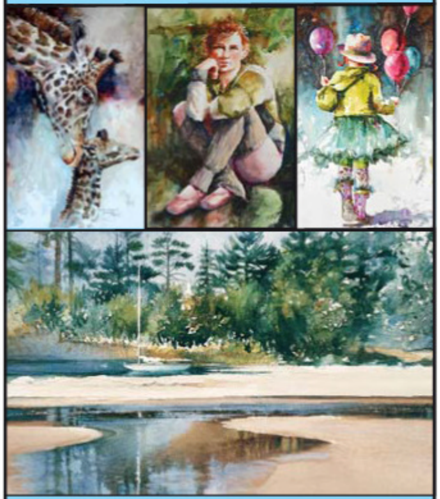

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8 hours of instruction–6 start to finish paintings.

Chris Unwin, NWS $100. Plus $5 S&H
3-day workshop. Step by step for many paintings, including flowers, still life and landscapes

Alexis Levine, NWS $100 plus $5 S&H
4-day workshop. Workshop includes painting still life and landscapes.

You can Preview and order all videos on:
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Sedona Arts Center

January 4, 2025, Casey Cheuvront,
Mini Masterpieces: Palette Knife and Cold Wax
January 10–31, 2025, Patricia Saxton,
Writing and Illustrating a Children's Book
January 18–19, 2025, Magda Gluszek,
Facial Features: Sculpting the Human Head
January 31, 2025, Kelli Klymenko,
iPhoneography (In-Person AND Online)
February 1–2, 2025, Lili Anne Laurin,
Introduction to Gouache
February 8–22, 2025, Julie Bernstein Engelmann,
The Living Abstract: Online Workshop
February 9–16, 2025, CJ Henderson,
Alternative Firing
February 15–16, 2025, Alison Crary,
Building Bold Landscapes in Soft Pastel
March 10–14, 2025, Carol Douglas,
Plein Air: Canyon Color for the Painter
March 28–30, 2025, Marianne Mitchell,
Painting into Abstraction
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Artists network

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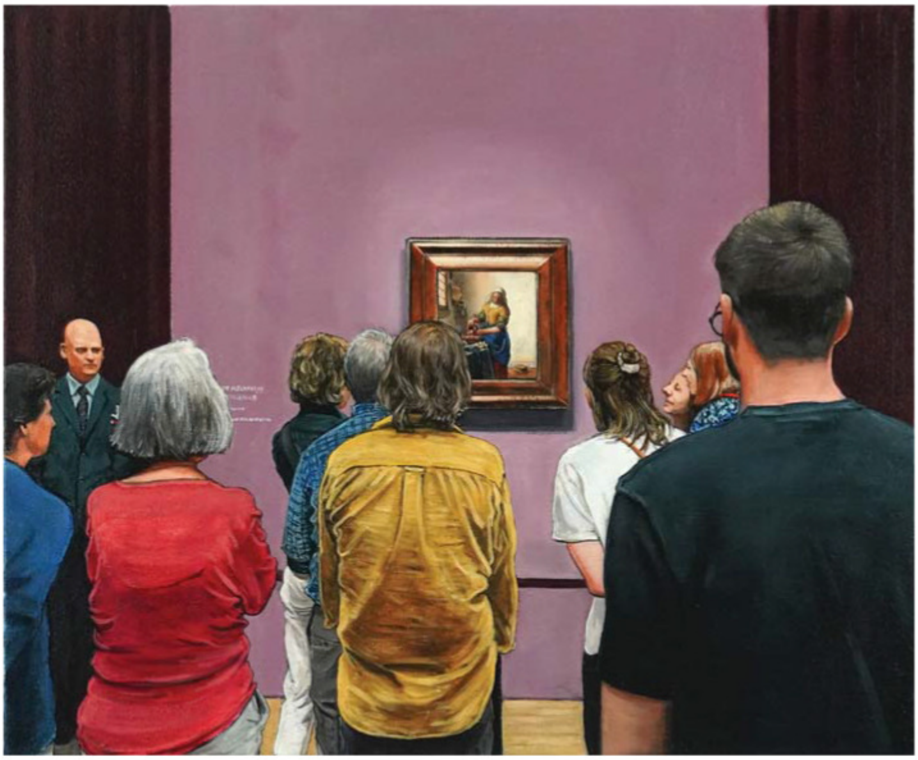

Joe Fig's **Vermeer, The Milkmaid/Rijksmuseum** (oil on linen, 10½x12½) is not only an ode to a great master, but also a wonderful exercise in composition.

“*My painting series, “Contemplating Vermeer,”* focuses on the 2023 blockbuster exhibition at the Rijksmuseum, in Amsterdam—the largest collection of Vermeer's paintings ever assembled. In response, I decided to focus on 18 of the Dutch master's works and the visitors standing before them, in contemplation. While the emphasis is on Vermeer's works, the spark for each painting is in the composition. Beyond replicating these scenes, I was also studying the artist's techniques and process. As a painter growing up in New York, I was lucky to have had access to eight Vermeers—five at The Metropolitan Museum of Art and three at The Frick Collection. Vermeer, who lived from 1632 to 1675, left a remarkably small oeuvre with little documentation; his process has been a mystery and subject of much speculation. Famously, the artist David Hockney was the first to suggest Vermeer had used a *camera obscura* to produce his exacting works. Of course, it would take a painter to notice.”

JOE FIG

The show “Joe Fig: Contemplating Vermeer,” which features 16 paintings from his series, is on view at the Sarasota Art Museum, in Sarasota, Fla., now through April 13.

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